

Afghan opposition fires rocket on Kabul

KABUL: A rocket fired by the northern-based opposition slammed into the Afghan capital on Sunday, but there were no immediate report of casualties, witnesses said.

The rocket landed near the combined military and civilian airport.

This was the first rocket attack on Kabul after a ceasefire between the Afghan warring factions ended last week. In recent days there has been fierce fighting between the Taliban fighters and the opposition forces loyal to Ahmad Shah Masood in northern Takhar and Baghlan provinces.—AP

Our Peshawar Bureau adds: Taliban on Sunday said to have regained control of territory lost to the opposition forces in the north of Afghanistan and debunked as false the claims by their rivals to have made territorial gains.

"This is all propaganda," Mullah Abdul Hye Mutmain told The News from the Taliban headquarters in Kandahar.

He conceded that the opposition had made some advancement in Archi district but the attack was repulsed and the territory lost had been retaken. "There is presently no problem in Archi. It is fully under our control," he claimed.

He also claimed that Burqa district in far north in Baghlan province had also been retaken by Taliban forces when they attacked the opposition on the vital route linking Kabul in the north to Badakhshan. Similarly, he said, that the Taliban had defeated the opposition forces in Nehrin district in Baghlan.

However, Taliban's claim could not be confirmed from independent sources.

Taliban rivals claim more gains in north

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The Afghan opposition claimed Sunday it had taken two more northern districts while the Taliban admitted losing territory in previous attacks, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The district of Nahrin in Baghlan province and Dasht-e-Archi in Kunduz province were overrun late Saturday by forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, the Pakistan-based private information agency said.

AIP quoted opposition sources as saying Masood's troops had also made other territorial gains in Kunduz around the towns of Khanabad and Emam Sahib and took hundreds of Taliban prisoner.

No independent confirmation of the opposition claim was available.

On Saturday the opposition claimed to have captured the district of Ishkamish in Takhar province and the district of Burka in Baghlan. Both provinces border on Kunduz.

AIP said a Taliban spokesman admitted the fall of Ishkamish, which lies on the supply route from Masood's base in the Panjsher Valley to the Tajikistan border.

But the spokesman denied the fall of other areas and claimed that the Islamic militia had repulsed the attacks.

"Dasht-e-Archi is fully in control of Taliban and we have beaten off all attacks by Masood's forces,"

the spokesman, Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi, told AIP.

Muttaqi said the Taliban had also repelled attacks on the district of Nahrin and Burka in Baghlan.

The Taliban spokesman blamed Masood for breaking a one-week truce agreement that was mediated between the two sides by a Saudi Arabia-based Afghan intellectual Sayed Jalal two days ago.

"We are still ready for a truce to facilitate an exchange of prisoners between the two sides," the spokesman said.

BBC reported on Sunday a senior leader of Afghan opposition Hizb-e-Wahdat, Haji Muhammad Muhaqq, has dismissed the reports of his surrender to the Taliban.

He strongly condemned the Taliban Deputy Interior Minister Khaksar, for making false claim of his (Muhaqq) surrender in a press conference. He termed the Taliban as puppets of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), adding that the presence of the student militia and Pakistanis in Afghanistan was provocative, illegal and violations of all international recognized norms and principles. Muhaqq ruled out his joining hands with the Taliban.

He also expressed doubts about the surrender of chief of break-away faction of Hizb-e-Wahdat, Muhammad Akbari and said that he did not believe that a person like him (Akbari) could defect to the Taliban.

FRONTIER POST 16 NOV 1993

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NATION 16 NOV 1993

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THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

FRONTIER POST

18 NOV 1989

Masood claims capturing Nijrab in north

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - The anti-Taliban opposition Tuesday claimed capturing strategic district of Nijrab in Kapisa province, about 85 km, north of Afghan capital.

Reports pouring in from Afghanistan suggested that the Ahmad Shah Masood-led opposition Friday launched a heavy attack on Taliban positions in Nijrab district and now the area was under their control.

Both the Taliban and the opposition sources confirmed heavy fighting around Nijrab, but both the sides made conflicting claims.

Masood sources claimed that after capturing Nijrab, the opposition forces were advancing towards the strategically located Tagab, but the hardline student militia rebutted these claims.

By attacking Nijrab, Masood opened a new front in Kapisa after Kundooz and Baghlan to engage the Taliban forces.

There were also reports that forces loyal to Masood had unleashed attacks on Taliban positions in northern Afghanistan in a bid to reopen their supply routes to the outer world ahead of harsh and killing winter.

In Kundooz and Baghlan provinces, the opposition had reportedly gained military edge over the Taliban.

But opening the battlefield in

Kapisa province by the opposition is aimed at not only building pressure on Kabul city, but also bring the vital Kabul-Jalalabad highway under its firing range.

AFP adds: An opposition spokesman Mohammad Aref said fighting between the Taliban militia and Masood's forces in northern Afghanistan around Burka and Ishkamish districts had eased overnight.

However, 10 civilians were killed in Taliban aerial bombardments in residential areas surrounding Nijrab.

"Fighting continued till late in the evening. Nijrab and its five main villages — parts of Tagab — have also been taken," he said.

Tagab is a neighbouring regional centre held by the Taliban, who control about 90 percent of Afghanistan.

The focus on Nijrab was designed to retake positions lost by Masood after the Taliban launched their autumn offensive on October 10.

The militia has since heavily mined the 10-kilometre strip between the two centres and one Western analyst estimated that any attempt to cross the zone could result in 30 percent to 50 percent casualties.

"Fighting is still going on around Tagab district," Aref added.

Masood to open eastern front against Taliban

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - In a bid to build more pressure on the Taliban, Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Masood is poised to open a new front in eastern Afghanistan against the hardline student militia. The opposition is busy in regrouping its allies for the upcoming offensive.

The anti-Taliban forces' activities in the east suggested that the opposition's military operation against the Islamic militia was expected in the near future.

Flushed with their recent military gains in northern Afghanistan, especially in Baghlan and Kundooz provinces, and in the north of Kabul, the anti-Taliban Masood-led opposition forces are now eyeing eastern parts of the country.

Few days back, Masood reportedly contacted Haji Qadeer, chief of eastern Shoor, to reactivate its supporters against the student militia.

According to Sahaar News Agency, emissaries of Masood have been holding meetings with the anti-Taliban commanders from Ningrahar, Kunar, Laghman and Nooristan provinces for the last three days.

In this regard, a crucial meeting was held on Wednesday last in Kantawa, Nooristan, which was attended among others by Abdullah Jan Wahidi, ex-governor Laghman, Commander Jehandad and Salim Addawal.

FRONTIER POST

20 NOV 1989

Rockets hit Kabul airport

KABUL, Nov 18: As fighting rages in northern Afghanistan, the opposition alliance stepped up its rocket assaults on Kabul on Wednesday, firing at least four rockets into the airport.

There were no reports of casualties.

The rockets were fired from positions north of the capital where soldiers loyal to opposition leader Ahmed Shah Masood are positioned.

The battlefield, barely 20km north of the city, has been relatively quiet in recent weeks.—AP

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Tagab is a neighbouring regional centre held by the Taliban, who control about 90 percent of Afghanistan.

The focus on Nijrab was designed to retake positions lost by Masood after the Taliban launched their autumn offensive on October 10.

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The battlefield, barely 20 km north of the city, has been relatively quiet in recent weeks.—AP

DAWN

18 NOV 1998

Taliban posts fall to Masood forces

Taliban claim gains in northeast

KABUL, Nov 17: Forces loyal to ethnic Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Masood have captured the district of Nejrab, 85km northeast of Kabul, an opposition spokesman said on Tuesday.

Mohammad Aref also said fighting between the Taliban and Masood's forces in northern Afghanistan around Burka and Ishkamish districts had eased overnight.

However, 10 civilians were killed in Taliban aerial bombardments in residential areas surrounding Nejrab.

"Fighting continued till late in the evening. Nejrab and its five main villages — parts of Tagab — have also been taken," he said.

Tagab is a neighbouring regional centre held by the Taliban.

The focus on Nejrab was designed to retake positions lost by Masood after the Taliban launched their autumn offensive on Oct 10.

The militia has since heavily mined the 10-kilometre strip between the two centres and one Western analyst estimated that any attempt to cross the zone could result in 30 per cent to 50 per cent casualties.

"Fighting is still going on around Tagab district," Aref added.

IRAN DENIES: Tehran strongly denied on Tuesday reports that an Iranian mission currently in neighbouring Afghanistan was there to pave the way for talks with the Taliban militia, insisting it was merely a technical mission.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will not hold any kind of political dialogue with the Taliban for the

opening of its diplomatic missions," said a foreign ministry statement quoted by the official news agency IRNA.

The militia, which now controls more than 80 per cent of Afghanistan, must first satisfy Tehran's demands over the killing of nine Iranian diplomats and a journalist by Taliban militiamen in August, the statement said.

These included "the punishment of the killers ... apology by the Taliban over this incident, release of the remaining Iranian prisoners and restoration of peace and security," it said.

"Only a group of Iranian technicians had proceeded to Afghanistan to inspect the properties of the Iranian consulates in Afghanistan, which are presently under the control of the Taliban militia," the statement said.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported Monday that a Iranian delegation had arrived in the western Afghan city of Herat to discuss with Taliban officials the possibility of a meeting between the militia's chief Mulla Mohammad Omar and Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi.

The Pakistan-based private news service said the delegation which included senior foreign ministry officials would also discuss the Iranian troop presence on the Afghan border and Taliban prisoners in Iranian custody.

The delegation would visit Kabul and Kandahar, where the Taliban have their headquarters, as well as Herat, the news agency said.

The visit is the first by an Iranian delegation since tension gripped relations between Tehran and the Taliban after the diplomats' killings.—AFP

PESHAWAR, Nov 22: Afghanistan's dominant Taliban militia on Sunday claimed that its forces had gained ground in northeastern Nahrin district which was captured by opposition forces last week, Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

A Taliban spokesman told Pakistan-based news service by telephone that Islamic militia had seized the main bazaar of the major town of Baghlan province from forces of key opposition commander Ahmed Shah Masood.

"The fighting is now raging on near the old bazaar of the city," the unidentified Taliban official said.

There was no independent confirmation of Taliban claim.

AIP said six fighters from the rival sides were killed and 21 injured in Sunday's fighting in which heavy artillery and cannon fire were used.

Nahrin fell to the forces of former defence minister and key opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood earlier this month.

Sporadic clashes have been reported in the area since the hardline militia lost it to Masood's forces.

Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said fighting was intense in Baghlan province, north of Kabul, and in Faryab province in the northwest of the war-torn country, between the Taliban and forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmed Shah Masood.

Both sides are fighting for position to take its control before the harsh Afghan winter snows.

The report said Taliban had also launched an offensive to re-take Darzaab district of northwestern Faryab province from opposition's control.

Masood's forces had driven the militia, which control more than two-thirds of war-ravaged Afghanistan, last week from the area.

Meanwhile, AIP said Saudi Arabia-based influential Afghan national Sayed Jalal has resumed his efforts to broker ceasefire between the warring sides.

Recent fighting dealt a blow to Jalal's mediation efforts which led to the release of scores of prisoners by the two sides in recent weeks.

DAWN

16 NOV 1993

DAWN

26 NOV 1993

Taliban launch attacks to regain areas from Masud

UN team leaves for central Afghanistan today to assess food needs

ISLAMABAD: Heavy fighting erupted in the northern Afghan provinces of Baghlan and Faryab Sunday as Taliban troops launched attacks to regain control of territory lost to opposition forces, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

It said the Taliban managed to enter the bazaar in Nahrin town in Baghlan province after day-long fighting in which both sides used heavy weapons.

No independent confirmation was available of the report. The fighting, now on in Nahrin's old bazaar, left five people dead and 21 injured on both sides, the agency said.

Nahrin fell to the forces of former defence minister and key opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masud earlier this month. Sporadic clashes have been reported in the area since the militia lost it to Masud's forces.

The AIP also reported fighting in Darzab town in northwestern province of Faryab after the Taliban launched a counter-attack to retake the town. It gave no details.

Meanwhile, a container full of am-

munition exploded at a military base of the Taliban in the capital Kabul Sunday. Authorities said there were no casualties. The ammunition container was parked at a Taliban military base in the northwest Badam Bagh neighborhood of the city.

The explosions continued for more than five minutes, witnesses said. No one was hurt and no equipment or property was destroyed, Taliban officials said.

Giant fumes of smoke could be seen from a distance as two fire-brigades rushed toward the base.

The fresh fighting is a set-back to the peace efforts launched by the Saudi-based Afghan trader Syed Jalal.

Sources close to him said that both the Taliban and Ahmed Shah Masud wanted to score as much victories against each other as possible before the snowfall. Both sides have desperately been making attempts to gain more grounds in different areas particularly Takhar, Baghlan and north of Kabul.

Syed Jalal came to Peshawar on a secret mission and after an overnight

stay in the city drove to Afghanistan via Torkahm. It is still not known if he has held talks with Pakistani or Afghan officials during the visit.

On the other hand, a United Nations team will leave for central Afghanistan today (Monday) to assess the food supply and security situation in Bamiyan and Hazarajat, UN sources said. The team will be recommending possible emergency food requirements before winter sets in, the sources added.

It would be the second team by the United Nations to visit the central Afghan province of Bamiyan and Hazarajat after the Taliban captured the area last month from the opposition Hizb-e-Wahdat. The first joint UN team had left for Hazarajat and Bamiyan on November 13.

A World Food Programme (WFP) Vulnerability Analysis Mapping (VAM) team, which probed the Hazarajat for several weeks this summer, concluded that the poorest people in the region — some 160,000 — would need about 5,300 tonnes of food aid to survive the winter.—Agencies

Heavy fighting in northern Afghanistan

KABUL: Heavy fighting was reported Monday north of the strategically important Salang Tunnel in Afghanistan amid conflicting reports surrounding gains made by opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masud. The Taliban militia and Masud said Masud had launched a major offensive against militia-held territory, resulting in casualties on both sides.

However, Taliban spokesman Amir Khan Muttaqi said the attacks had been repulsed while Masud's forces said they had advanced 15 kilometres north of the Salang tunnel, which links northern Afghanistan with the south.

Masud is currently in control of the tunnel. "Today the enemy launched a big attack against Khenjan from Salang and Andarab. Their attack from Andarab was pushed back in," Muttaqi told.

"In the attack from Salang they captured our three posts but our forces recaptured those posts and the attack was foiled," Muttaqi told reporters.

Masud spokesman Abdullah said 25 Taliban troops were captured after the front line was broken at Salang and that the Pali Freestagan bridge was captured despite Taliban aerial bombardments.

He said districts around Nahrin were captured and the villages cleared while fighting had escalated in Ghor province.

"Latest reports that our forces have laid a siege to Cheghcheran," Abdullah said. AFP

Taliban capture northern town

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The Taliban militia have flushed out troops loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood from a strategic district in northwestern Afghanistan, the Afghan Islamic Press said Tuesday.

The private news service said the militia seized Darzab town in Faryab province in a counter-offensive launched against opposition forces two days ago.

The fighting left nine people dead and more than a dozen wounded on both sides, it said, adding that the Taliban captured two commanders and 97 opposition soldiers.

Darzab, a mountainous town in Faryab province, was captured by the hardline Islamic militia amid its triumphs in northern Afghanistan in July.

But the town fell to the opposition after guerrilla operations earlier this month. The militia launched the counter attacks over the weekend to retake the territories from the opposition.

Meanwhile, opposition sources said fighting continued Tuesday in northern Afghanistan.

Abdullah, spokesman for opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, said 50 Taliban troops were taken prisoner and another 30 killed in the fighting which subsided towards the after-

noon.

But the Taliban were preparing a counter-attack after Masood's forces advanced to within three kilometres from Khenjan district, Abdullah told AFP.

Also at Darzab in (northwestern) Faryab province the Taliban launched an attack today but they did not make any gains," he said.

The Salang Tunnel, a vital thoroughfare, links Kabul to the border with Central Asian republics through the Hindu Kush mountains.

Meanwhile, Taliban authorities have released 100 opposition prisoners from the capital's notorious Pulicharkhi jail, the Islamic militia's official Radio Shariat reported.

The radio said the release was aimed at boosting the mediatory process initiated by a Saudi-based Afghan businessman, Sayed Jalal.

"The prisoners were released unilaterally to show the goodwill of the Islamic Emirate," it said.

In a Monday interview with Radio Shariat, Jalal said both the Taliban and Masood had so far released 215 prisoners through his efforts.

Jalal said he was hopeful a truce and further prisoners-swap could be initiated.

Taliban capture northern town from rival troops

KABUL (AFP) - Heavy fighting continued Tuesday in northern Afghanistan with anti-Taliban forces advancing further around the strategic Salang Tunnel, opposition sources said.

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The Salang Tunnel, a vital thoroughfare, links Kabul to the border with Central Asian republics through the Hindu Kush mountains.

Meanwhile, in Pakistan the Afghan Islamic Press said the Taliban militia has flushed out troops loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood from the strategic Darzab district.

The private news service said Darzab was seized by the Islamic militia in a counter-offensive launched against opposition forces two days ago.

The fighting left nine people dead and more than a dozen wounded on both sides, AIP said, adding that the Taliban captured two commanders and 97 opposition soldiers.

There was no immediate independent confirmation of the rival claims.

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The Taliban militia and Masood both said Masood had launched a major offensive against militia-held territory, resulting in casualties on both sides.

However Taliban spokesman Amir Khan Muttaqi said the attacks had been repulsed while Masood's forces said they had advanced 15 kilometers north of the tunnel which links northern Afghanistan with the south.

Masood is currently in control of the tunnel.

"Today the enemy launched a big attack against Khenjan from Salang and Andarab. Their attack from Andarab was pushed back instantly. "In the attack from Salang they captured our three posts but our forces recaptured those posts and the attack was foiled," Muttaqi

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He said districts around Nahrin were captured and the villages cleared while fighting had escalated in Ghor province.

"Latest reports I have say that our forces have laid a seige to Cheghcheran," Abdullah said.

Another report said the head of the breakaway faction of Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat, Ustad Muhammad Akbari with his 36 close aides has arrived in Kabul.

He was accorded a warm welcome by the officials of student militia particularly the personnel of the Intelligence Department. Just after his arrival, Ustad Akbari and Ayatullah Sadiq Parwani were taken to the Intercontinental hotel for a meeting with Deputy Chief (Vice President) of the Taliban Interim Council, Maulvi Abdul Qadeer.

FRONTIER POST
25 NOV 1993

NATION 25 NOV 1993

FRONTIER POST 24 NOV 1993

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Shia leader for multi-ethnic govt

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Meanwhile, a leading Shia commander who has defected to the Taliban on Monday urged the militia to include all Afghan ethnic groups in a multi-representative government.

'We want the Hazara to have a befitting place, so far they have not had this place in the government structure,' Mohammad Aqbari told reporters.

Aqbari arrived in Kabul Sunday to negotiate the role of Shia Hazaras in any Taliban government. This will include talks with supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar in Kandahar next week.

Aqbari and several thousand troops defected from an Iranian-backed faction of the anti-Taliban alliance two months ago which allowed the militia to stage sweeping advances in central and northern Afghan provinces.

'In its entirety we expect the Islamic emirate to observe justice regarding Afghanistan's Shia Hazara population.

'This is our expectation that the Hazaras be given a due share in proportion with their presence in society in the country's administration,' Aqbari said.

US-based organisation Human Rights Watch said last month that Taliban forces massacred around 2,000 Shias when they drove opposition forces out of Mazar-i-Sharif in August.

Aqbari also led a break away group from the major Hezb-i-Wahdat in 1994 after a leadership split.

Opposition forces make gains near Salang tunnel

KABUL, Nov 24: Heavy fighting continued on Tuesday in northern Afghanistan, with anti-Taliban forces advancing further around the strategic Salang tunnel, opposition sources said.

Abdullah, spokesman for opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, said 50 Taliban troops were taken prisoner and another 30 killed in the fighting.

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The Salang tunnel, a vital thoroughfare, links Kabul to the border with Central Asian republics through the Hindu Kush mountains.

Meanwhile, in Islamabad the Afghan Islamic Press said the Taliban had flushed out troops loyal to Ahmad Shah Masood from the strategic Darzab district.

The private news service said Darzab was seized by the Taliban in a counter-offensive launched against opposition forces two days ago.

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dead and more than a dozen wounded on both sides, AIP said, adding that the Taliban captured two commanders and 97 opposition soldiers.

Darzab, a mountainous town, was captured by the militia amid its triumphs in northern Afghanistan in July.

But the town fell to the opposition after guerilla operations earlier this month. The militia launched the counter attacks over the weekend to retake the territories from the opposition, AIP said.

Meanwhile, Taliban authorities have released 100 opposition prisoners from the capital's notorious Pul-i-Charkhi jail, the Radio Shariat reported.

The radio said the release was aimed at boosting the mediatory process initiated by a Saudi-based Afghan businessman, Sayed Jalal.

'The prisoners were released unilaterally to show the goodwill of the Islamic emirate,' it said.

Abdullah said the release had nothing to do with aiding mediation between Masood and the Taliban.

'No progress has been made in this respect. The released prisoners were simply civilians who the Taliban had captured,' he said.

—AFP

NATION

24 NOV 1993

DAWN

25 NOV 1993

26 NOV 1998

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Taliban launch attack against opposition

KABUL: The Taliban has launched a counter attack against opposition forces north of the strategic Salang Tunnel, with heavy bombardment by the Afghan militia's fighter jets, opposition sources said Wednesday.

Abdullah said forces loyal to ethnic Tajik commander, Ahmad Shah Masood, were fending off the attacks around Khenjan district, where he claimed 110 militia troops were captured and 80 killed on Tuesday.

No independent confirmation was immediately available.

Abdullah also said areas around Burka, where fighting erupted two weeks ago, had been mopped-up by Masood and the region was now completely held by the opposition.

Meanwhile, the Taliban released an Iranian lorry driver on Wednesday, the last of a number of Iranians held by the extremist militia in Afghanistan, the official news agency IRNA reported.

The driver, Manouchehr Amiri, was handed over to an Iranian foreign ministry representative in the western Afghan city of Herat on Wednesday morning and is reported to have returned to Iran.

Furthermore, UN officials returned Tuesday from a two-day mission to the central highlands region of Afghanistan to assess humanitarian needs and look into the security situation.—Agencies

Taliban bomb opposition posts

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"As a result of this morning's operation, 70 people joined us and 45 others were taken as prisoner," he said.

With the "capture" of Burka "our supply route from the Tajikistan border is open and unhindered to the areas north of Kabul," Abdullah added.—AFP

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26 NOV 1998

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65 Taliban dead, 150 imprisoned

Masood troops claim major advance

KABUL, Nov 27: Afghanistan's opposition alliance on Friday said it had made major inroads into the northern Kunduz province during attacks on three fronts against the Taliban.

Alliance spokesman Abdullah said casualties included 65 Taliban troops dead and 150 imprisoned, while 20 opposition soldiers were killed and 30 injured.

He said forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood had advanced 15 kilometres west from Bangi district, whose neighbouring area Taloqan was secured by Masood last month after weeks of heavy fighting.

Masood's troops had launched a second operation in Imam Sahib in Kunduz, near the border with Tajikistan. Both districts form part of an intricate supply network linked to Masood's base in the Panjsher Valley.

"The operation started last night and we captured more than half of Imam Sahib district. Fighting is still going on and we have advanced 20 kilometres," Abdullah said.

He said fighting was heaviest around Bangi, where most casualties took place. Clashes also erupted in Faryab province while a Russian-made Luna heavy rocket struck Kabul.

Abdullah said the Taliban had been forced to divert troops to

Faryab from Kandahar and Herat, where they were deployed to offset a military threat from Iran at the border after relations soured in August over the murder of nine Iranian diplomats and a journalist.

On Thursday Faryab came under Taliban aerial bombardment but one Taliban fighter jet was shot down, Abdullah added.

Masood, an ethnic Tajik, is battling to secure mountainous supply routes from the Central Asian republics to the Panjsher Valley northeast of Kabul lost during the militia's sweeping northern offensive two months ago.

Both sides are eager to take control of the routes ahead of the severe Afghan winter.

Control would allow Masood to stock up on arms and allow his forces to regroup once the region is cut off by snow which blankets the Hindu Kush mountain range between December and February.

Analysts say this would strengthen Masood in preparation for a spring offensive, but if the Taliban can deny him access then the opposition alliance could emerge from winter a severely depleted force.

In Taliban-held Kabul, constant missile attacks and shelling have been staged against the capital's airport which Masood maintains is being used to ferry Taliban arms and supplies around the country.—AFP

Heavy fighting continues in N Afghanistan

KABUL: Heavy fighting continued Tuesday in northern Afghanistan with anti-Taliban forces advancing further around the strategic Salang Tunnel, opposition sources said.

Abdullah, spokesman for opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, said 50 Taliban troops were taken prisoner and another 30 killed in the fighting which subsided towards the afternoon.

But the Taliban were preparing a counter-attack after Masood's forces advanced to within three kilometres from Khenjan district, Abdullah said.

Also at Darzab in (northwestern) Faryab province the Taliban launched an attack today but they did not make any gains," he said.—AFP

FRONTIER POST

25 NOV 1998

DAWN

28 NOV 1998

Anti-Taliban alliance claims major advance

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's opposition alliance on Friday said it had made major inroads into the far north Kunduz province during attacks on three fronts against the Taliban Islamic militia.

Alliance spokesman Abdullah said casualties included 65 Taliban troops dead and 150 imprisoned, while 20 opposition soldiers were killed and 30 injured.

He said forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood had advanced 15 kilometres (nine miles) west from Bangi district, whose neighbouring area Taloqan was secured by Masood last month after weeks of heavy fighting. Masood's troops had launched a second operation in Imam Sahib in north Kunduz near the border with Tajikistan. Both districts form part of an intricate supply network linked to Masood's base in the Panjsher Valley. "The operation started last night and we captured more than half of Imam Sahib district. Fighting is still going on and we have advanced 20 kilometres (12 miles)," Abdullah told AFP Friday.

He said fighting was heaviest around

Bangi where most casualties were reported. Clashes also erupted in Faryab province while a Russian-made Luna heavy rocket struck Kabul.

Independent confirmation of the fighting was not immediately available while there were no reports of casualties from the rocket strike on the capital.

Abdullah said the Islamic militia had been forced to divert troops to Faryab from Kandahar and Herat, where they were deployed to offset a military threat from Iran at the border after relations soured in August over the murder of nine Iranian diplomats and a journalist by Taliban fighters.

On Thursday Faryab came under Taliban aerial bombardment but one Taliban fighter jet was shot down, Abdullah added.

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Both sides are eager to take control of the routes ahead of the severe Afghan winter

NATION

28 NOV 1998

Kabul airport heavily rocketed

KABUL, Nov 28: Opposition forces on Saturday staged a series of rocket strikes on Kabul airport and claimed the capture of a strategic border district from the Taliban in Kunduz province.

Residents said at least five people were wounded after about a dozen rockets struck the airport on the northern outskirts of the capital.

"But thankfully no one was killed," one resident said.

Anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Masood has targeted the airport where Taliban traffic has been heavy over recent nights, using heavy rockets from the Russian-made Luna series, and lower grade missiles.

The rocket strikes came as forces

attached to Masood entered the river port town of Sher Khan Bander on the Afghan side of the country's border with Tajikistan, an opposition spokesman said.

The spokesman, Abdullah, said opposition troops faced minimal resistance after launching a three-pronged attack.

"The Taliban did not offer any resistance and fled, our forces are only 25 kilometres from Kunduz city, which is now under threat from three directions," he said.

According to opposition reports, Masood has now made substantial gains across the Afghan side of the far north border with Tajikistan stretching from his supply base in Taloqan.—AFP

29 NOV 1998
DAWN

Afghan deadly war a child's play



ANDARAB: Two Afghan boys help unload rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) in the northern City of Andarab.-AFP

ANDARAB, Afghanistan (AFP) - The chubby-cheeked boy, his hair shorn and his face crapped with coal, gleefully helps unload anti-aircraft rockets from a helicopter in this northern Afghan village.

For the first time, the option to unload the Soviet-made MIG rockets for the forces of the position commander Ahmed Shah Masood is a game, a welcome distraction from recent battles in the region.

While Masood fights the Taliban militia, Afghan children are bearing the brunt of the conflict.

Between 300,000 and 400,000 children have been killed during the past 20 years' fighting in the war-ravaged country, international aid organisations say.

Up to four million children have died in the same period from malnutrition and illness, according to a recent report by UNICEF and Save the Children.

The report added that 268,000 Afghan children under the age of five die each year from easily treatable illnesses such as diarrhoea and pulmonary conditions.

A quarter of Afghan children fail to reach the age of five for a variety of other reasons, the report says.

Landmines are among the biggest cause of infant fatalities. With some 10 million of the deadly devices scattered across the country, Afghanistan is the most heavily mined

place on Earth.

Young boys venture out of their homes much more than their sheltered sisters, and as a result are far more vulnerable to landmines, which as a rule kill rather than maim children because of their small size.

The children of Andarab, however, appear unconcerned as they ferry new mines for the use of Masood's forces holed up just to the east. Their involvement is indicative of the conditions Afghan children grow up in.

The intruders wear all that most of the poorly clothed and barefoot children of this region know. They speak of it with a detachment and a familiarity that belie their tender years.

They recall without apparent emotion the battles of the past weeks while speaking with pride of Masood, the ethnic Tajik general whose forces have beaten back a Taliban advance that threatened to put the whole country under the Islamic militia's control.

For most school is nothing but a distant memory as they labour on their parents' meagre paddy fields and farms, threatened by the ubiquitous mines.

Hardly easy at the best of times, life is about to get much harder for the long-suffering children with the onset of the harsh Afghan winter.

Afghanistan one of the most mine-affected countries

By Ismail Khan

PESHAWAR: Latest reports suggest that nearly two decades after Afghanistan plunged into civil war, it is still one of the severely mine-affected countries in the world.

A report published in the 'Hidden Killer' compiled by the Office of Humanitarian Demining Programmes of United States Department of State Bureau of Political-Military Affairs quotes the UN figure for the number of landmines in Afghanistan at 10 million, though the original source of this estimate, it points out, cannot be verified and the actual number may thus never be determined. Quoting another UN study report, it said that the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) reduced the number of landmines to between 5-7 million. Some NGOs, based on actual experience in heavily mined areas, claim that the official estimates are still too high and should be lowered than to less than a million. An estimate by The HALO Trust in 1997 put the figure of landmines at 6,20,000. Roughly 50 different types of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines have been identified during the clearance operations, it said while referring to a UNDHA report.

The estimates are still high enough to place Afghanistan among one of the 12 heavily mine-affected countries of the world. They include

Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, Eritrea, Iraq, Mozambique, Namibia, Somalia, Nicaragua and Sudan. These 12 countries together account for almost 50 percent of the landmines currently deployed in the world and also suffer the highest number of landmine casualties.

The report released in September 1998 identified provinces bordering Pakistan and Iran — the western, southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan, covering 162 of the total 356 districts as mine-affected. Security belts of landmines exist around major cities and at airports, government installations, and power stations. Grazing lands, waterways, schools, paths, villages and cities are infested with mostly antipersonnel mines.

The majority of landmines, the report said, have been found in agricultural and grazing lands and in or near irrigation system. It said landmines are responsible for depopulation of vast tracts of the countryside, affecting crop harvests and interfering with the transportation of food supplies into the cities. Roughly 50 percent of Afghan villages and an estimated 25 percent of paved roads have been destroyed or ruined.

Referring to recent field surveys conducted by the VVAF and the UNHCR, it said that landmines were the primary reason for refugees leaving Afghanistan and not returning home. Over two million Afghan

refugees remain in Iran and Pakistan.

The continuing civil war, it said, had severely affected the economy of Afghanistan. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has fallen substantially since 1982 because of the loss of labour and capital and the disruption of trade and transport. The UNDP now rates Afghanistan as 171 out of 173 countries in terms of greatest poverty and least development. American Central Intelligence Agency in its 1997 World Fact Book put the mid-1997 total population of the war-ravaged country at 237.38 million.

According to ICRC statistics, the most dangerous activities to rural populations are tilling fields, herding livestock and foraging for wood and food. Overall national figures on the rate of landmine-related injuries and death are not available, but casualty estimates indicate that landmines and Unexploded Ordinance (UXO) cause an estimated 10 to 12 civilian casualties per day. Recent MSF and ICRC surveys suggest that this figure is too low, since many victims never get to treatment centres because of lack of transportation, significant distances, or impassable roads.

UNOCHA's Mine Action Capacities coordinates efforts and those of international NGOs throughout Afghanistan. The UNOCHA 1997 budget included \$ 18 million for mine awareness, mine clearance, surveys, marking, and training.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

06 NOV 1998

Travails of urban Afghan refugees

Ashfaq Sadiq

The Kremlin's decision to invade Afghanistan in 1979 not only led to the disintegration of the mighty USSR, but also gave rise to a plethora of humanitarian problems resulting from large scale trans-border movement of the Afghan population. Those who were obliged to leave their homes became targets of exploitation, discrimination or debilitating dependency; those who remained behind have long been facing inhumane conditions.

Installation of Mujahideen led regime in Kabul, after the fall of Najib in 1992, gave birth to suspicions and a sense of suffocation among the Afghans in the major urban centres. The immediate result was a renewed flow of refugees into Pakistan. They were, however, relatively highly educated, modern, urbanised and, therefore, unwilling to confine themselves to the refugee camps.

Ignorant of the miseries they would face in the days to come, almost all rushed to Islamabad, a perceived safe haven, to preserve their previous lifestyle. These 'new refugees' enjoyed a high social status in their own country, where they owned big houses and villas in major cities. On their arrival in Pakistan, they wanted to hire big houses, if not villas. The consequent sudden rise in demand for houses brought two drastic effects: First, high house rents which caused a sense of resentment among locals for the Afghans since they could not afford the soaring rents due to their limited financial resources. Secondly, the 'old refugees' were forced, due to their financial constraints, to live in cramped conditions since they were big in number and small in resources. This resulted in poor and unhygienic living conditions, and deep frustration.

Little research has been done on the conditions and problems they face here. For instance, on their arrival in Pakistan, especially in Islamabad, their first encounter was with the officials of different national and international agencies working for refugees. Some of these officials, fond of wealth, wine and women, were quite demanding in return for granting refugee cards, work permits, residential permits and so on.

In response to their nasty demands, the refugees had neither wealth nor wine but innocent women; the only asset to offer in order to get shelter. The reluctant ones were taken into police custody where they were maltreated and pressurised to comply with officials' demands. This resulted in diminished moral sensitivity and perpetration of such practices. They are looked down upon by the so-called elite from all walks of life without assessing the factors which forced them to act in such a way. Who is to be blamed for this pathetic situation?

First resistance and then protracted factional war has destroyed the social institutions too — most effected, perhaps, being that of marriage. The Afghans, right from the beginning, belong to different races and profess different creeds which led them to identify themselves in ethno-linguistic terms. These tribes have different norms, customs and traditions. Marriages among different tribes are not encouraged and instances of inter-marriages between Pushtuns and Uzbeks, and Tajiks and Hazaras are rare. When the refugees left their homeland, families scattered, as the socio-political limitations forced them to different countries around the globe.

Now refugee families, at least those residing in Islamabad, are suffering from a new dilemma. They cannot easily find suitable life partners from their own tribe, nor can they marry their girls with boys belonging to other ethnic groups due to the centuries old taboos. They also find great difficulty in approaching and choosing a life-partner from members of the same family, tribe or ethnic group living in another country due to their inability to meet the complicated immigration requirements. They can neither alter their old social customs, nor can they amend the international immigration laws. There seems to be no way out.

In most refugee families, preservation of identity also has become a critical problem. The institutions which help in the preservation and strengthening of identity are no longer available to the Afghans. Their children are not easily admitted to Pakistani schools for one reason or the other. They themselves are not in a position to establish and run their own educational institu-

tions. At present, there are a few schools, up to the primary and secondary level, but no colleges which are run by Afghans to impart education to their children according to the curricula which could meet their socio-cultural requirements.

Same is the case with health facilities. The existing hospitals are grossly inadequate to offer satisfactory medical facilities for refugees as the health care system in the country is corrupt and inefficient. Private medical treatment is inaccessible to even Pakistanis, what to talk of the poor refugees. The absence of facilities and apathy on the part of the authorities has its own negative consequences: professional beggary, prostitution, and child labour. Now

which is responsible for their rehabilitation is confronted with politico-monetary constraints. With the drying up of humanitarian aid, most of the non-governmental organisations other than UNHCR have lost interest in rehabilitation of the Afghan refugees and are looking for other areas where they can make money. The human rights activists have other issues to focus on in order to attract the attention of the world media rather than speak for the poor Afghans who have suddenly become inconsequential.

The government of Pakistan is in great difficulty. It can not afford this burden alone because of its financial constraints especially after the stoppage of economic aid from donor

The government of Pakistan is in great difficulty. The country cannot afford this burden alone because of its financial constraints especially after the stoppage of economic aid from donor agencies

there is no Tajik, no Pushtun, no Uzbek and no Hazara but only a refugee striving for survival with very little hope.

Afghan refugees are a status-less section of Islamabad's population. Therefore, there is no security of any kind for the Afghans living in Pakistan's capital. They are simply 'refugees'. They are assaulted, beaten, injured and sometimes killed. Their women are kidnapped and raped. Their elders are dishonoured and their children abused. They are deprived of their belongings while the police pays no heed to their complaints against the culprits. There is no job market for these refugees in keeping with their capabilities, skills and expertise. Their economic exploitation is at its peak. They can neither defend their basic rights of life and liberty nor can they go back home because of the uncertain political conditions in Afghanistan. They are being punished for the crimes they never committed.

Here is a question that needs to be addressed: What is their status and who is responsible for them? The answer is vexing and difficult. It also depends on who is asking the question, who replies and who listens to the conversation. The ground reality is that the United Nations' High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)

agencies! Pakistan could approach the outside world to propagate the miseries of the Afghans and get humanitarian aid for their betterment as it did during the resistance against the Soviet expansionist designs. Even the Muslim world has closed its eyes, leaving Pakistan alone to deal with this problem. The indifference of the world in general and of the Muslim world in particular, in case of the Afghan refugees, shows that perhaps refugees are not entitled to any human rights. The question however is: who is going to help them?

74 NOV 1993
THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Taliban influence to spread in Pakistan

By Our Staff Correspondent

WASHINGTON, Nov 16: Taliban troops have started enforcing their strict Islamic code in refugee camps inside Pakistan and soon they will extend their influence to other parts of Pakistan, *Washington Times* reported on Monday.

In a special report filed by its correspondent Marion Lloyd in Peshawar, the paper said Pakistan was allowing the Taliban to extend its harsh rule across the border and giving it a free hand to root out opposition in the refugee camps.

Pakistan human rights groups charge that the closure of four universities where Afghan women were able to continue their education after being expelled from schools in their homeland is part of a larger plan to force the refugees back to Afghanistan.

"They want (the refugees) to accept Taliban rule, to submit to Taliban rules in every possible manner," said Afrasiyab Khattak, regional coordinator of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. "The government of Pakistan is yielding to this pressure."

More than 5,000 Afghan refugees, including more than 1,000 women, had to give up their studies when Pakistan shut down the four refugee universities, saying they were operating illegally.

The government also said the schools were offering substandard education. The schools' administrators and human rights activists say the charges are absurd. Instead, they say the closure on Aug 28 was part of a gradual campaign on the part of the Pakistan government and its Taliban allies to force the refugees back to Afghanistan.

Critics also cite the eviction of 200 refugee families from cheap public housing in Peshawar and the seizure of more than 4,000 vehicles owned by Afghan refugees. Some 800 other families have been ordered to leave one refugee camp to make room for the construction of a road, according to refugees and human rights officials.

The rights groups point to repeated pleas by the Taliban, who are in desperate need of recruits, for the refugees to return home. Pakistan, for its part, is eager to please the Taliban because it seeks access to the lucrative trade route through Afghanistan to Central Asia.

Pakistani officials deny they are

helping the Taliban, which introduced a stern Islamic regime after capturing the Afghan capital, Kabul, in September 1996. They say they are merely cracking down on squatters and profiteers within the refugee community.

"We had been very permissive before," said Imran Zeb, an official at the government-run Afghan Refugees Commission in Peshawar. He insisted that no refugee would be repatriated against his will.

However, he said, funding for the refugees had shrunk drastically since the collapse of the Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan in 1992. In the absence of the communist threat, most international donors, including the United States, had withdrawn support.

The Pakistan government, saddled with its worst-ever economic crisis, has reduced the refugee commission's staff from 7,000 employees to 1,200. While 71,000 refugees returned to Afghanistan between January and October this year, most say they are waiting for an end to the fighting that has ravaged their country in the past two decades.

"Of course we want to go home. Wouldn't a bird want to be in his nest? But there is no safety and no work," said Isa Khan, a refugee from the eastern Nangarhar region of Afghanistan. Another refugee said Pakistan police were demanding bribes from refugees and harassing residents of the Kacha Ghari camp, a squalid expanse of crumbling mud huts on the outskirts of Peshawar.

The Taliban troops have strong support in Pakistan from Islamic fundamentalists, who have increased their influence under the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Mr Sharif is attempting to push through a constitutional amendment that would replace the last vestiges of the country's British-style court system with one based on Islamic law.

Although Mr Sharif denies his government is providing military or financial support for the Taliban, the Islamic law bill is widely seen as an effort to bolster ties with the militants in exchange for trade concessions.

The decision to close the universities is seen as one way of pleasing the Islamic militia, who oppose Western education.

DAWN

17 NOV 1996

Hezb-i-Wahdat leader surrenders to Taliban

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - An Afghan opposition faction leader has surrendered to Taliban forces in the central Bamiyan province along with several of his lieutenants, a report said Friday.

Cold and lack of supplies forced Mohammad Akbari, head of a breakaway faction of the Shiite Muslim Hezb-i-Wahdat party, to hand himself over to the Taliban in the district of Waras on Thursday, the private Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said.

Akbari had taken refuge in the mountains after the Islamic militia captured the central province in September, AIP said.

The report, which quoted Taliban officials, could not be independently confirmed.

The main Hezb-i-Wahdat grouping is led by Karim Khalili, who escaped before the Taliban takeover of his Bamiyan stronghold.

Forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, entrenched in several areas in the north and northeast, have thwarted the Taliban drive to take control of the whole of Afghanistan.

Taliban deny ethnic cleansing charges

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Taliban have rejected the "Human Rights Watch" recent report about the ethnic cleansing in northern Afghanistan by the Islamic militia and invited the United Nations to probe into the killing. R Shariyah broadcast, monitored here on Thursday described the report as baseless and aimed at maligning the Taliban Islamic government. "They (human rights groups) have been holding Taliban responsible for the killing of those who in fact were killed in fighting," the broadcast said. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has invited the United Nations to send a delegation to the war-ravaged Afghanistan to ascertain the facts as to who is correct and who is liar," it added.

Medicines despatched to Afghanistan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - The Muslim Hands charitable organisation has dispatched in heavy quantity educational material and medicines to the needy people of the northern Afghanistan via Chitral.

According to a press release issued here on Wednesday, Shamsur Rehman Shams, president, and Rahimullah, general secretary of the Muslim Hands told a news conference in Chitral Tuesday that the body was committed and dedicated to helping the needy people throughout the world and it had taken up the case of the people of the northern Afghanistan on high priority.

Giving the details of the dispatched material, they said that 300 mats, 40,000 books, notebooks, pens, paper, chalk and 27 cartons of medicines had been dispatched to the northern Afghanistan.

They also disclosed that the Muslim Hands would purchase food stuff, 100 beds for hospitals and sewing machines for the needy and deserving women of Tajikistan and airlift them to Faizabad, in the Badakshan province of Afghanistan.

This material would be supplied to various orphanages and women welfare centres in Faizabad, they said.

About the aims and objectives of the Muslim Hands, they said that the organisation was assisting the destitute, helpless and deserving in 22 countries of the world.

They added that the war-hit people of Afghanistan particularly deserved the world's attention in terms of relief.

Hizb-e-Wahdat Chief holds talks with Taliban

KABUL (NNI) - The head of the breakaway faction of Shia Hizb-e-Wahdat, Ustad Muhammad Akbari with his 36 close aides arrived in the Afghan capital Kabul to meet the senior Taliban leaders.

He was accorded a warm welcome by the officials of students militia particularly the personnel of the Intelligence Department. Just after his arrival, Ustad Akbari and Ayatullah Sadiq Parwani were taken to the Intercontinental Hotel for a meeting with the Deputy Chief (Vice President) of the Taliban Interim Council Maulvi Abdul Qadeer.

Akbari until recently was one of the key members of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. But his party suffered a serious setback when the students militia overran a number of areas in northern Afghanistan and seized Bamiyan in central Afghanistan and the stronghold of Shia Hazaras, reports Bakhtar News Agency.

Most of the guerillas of both factions of Hizb-e-Wahdat either surrendered to the Taliban or fled to the surrounding hilltops in Bamiyan province. Akbari was amongst those who had taken shelter in the nearby mountains. But, later he along with his 20 top commanders decided to surrender to the Taliban officials in Bamiyan province.

His whereabouts had been kept secret by the students militia since his formal joining of the Taliban ranks and announcing his allegiance to the supreme Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar.

Taliban sources have said that his support to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has for the time being given them somewhat relief as they would now totally and in a better way concentrate on the only arch rival Ahmed Shah Masood fighting government forces in Takhar, Baghlan and north of Kabul.

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THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Former Afghan air force general murdered in Thall

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: A former Afghan air force general, Shireen Agha, was murdered by unknown persons in Thall in Hangu district Monday.

The deceased was known as Gen Shireen Agha Pilot on account of his career as a pilot in the Afghan air force. The Peshawar-based Sahaar News Agency said he was a close aide to former Afghan army chief Gen Shahnawaz Tani. The latter took refuge in Pakistan along with his supporters after the failure of his coup d'etat against the then Afghan president Dr Najibullah in 1991. Gen Shireen Agha also fled to Pakistan on this occasion.

An FIR lodged by the deceased's wife at the Thall police station blamed unknown people for the murder of her husband. She said Gen Shireen Agha left his house at about 7 am and his body was found

near a graveyard located close to the Civil Hospital in Thall.

A police official in Thall said they were still waiting for the medical report of the deceased. He added that the relations of Gen Shireen Agha had taken his body to Khost in southern Afghanistan for burial.

The Sahaar News Agency said Gen Shireen Agha used to fly jet-fighters, especially MiG-21s, during the "jihad" and often bombed mujahideen positions. It said he played a crucial role in Gen Tani's failed coup attempt against Dr Najibullah. It added that the deceased was an active member of Da Sulhe Milli Ghorzang formed by Gen Tani and his supporters in Pakistan. It quoted a member of Gen Tani's group as saying that the Taliban were behind Gen Shireen Agha's murder. However, Taliban officials denied the allegations and said they never resorted to terrorism in Pakistan.

Top Dostum aide supports Taliban

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: An important Afghan opposition personality, Engineer Mohammad Nasim Mehdi, has announced his decision to support the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan.

In an interview with the BBC Pashto service Tuesday, he said he had decided to back the Taliban as they had restored peace and security in Afghanistan and enforced an Islamic system of governance.

Mehdi was a leading commander of Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) in Faryab province in northern Afghanistan during the Afghan jihad and later joined Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Rashid Dostum and became his top aide.

"I came to Kandahar with my

family about three months ago and am living here in peace. I want to make public my support for the Taliban to remove confusion," he explained.

Engineer Mehdi denied the impression that he was captured by the Taliban during fighting in northern Afghanistan in August and had been made to issue the pro-Taliban statement under duress. "I have joined the Taliban of my own free will.

He added that many other opposition commanders and figures in northern Afghanistan, including Maulvi Ghazi of Jauzjan, Shahabuddin Khan, Taj Mohammad Khan, Mohammad Hashim Khan and Abdul Khaliq Khan from Balkh, Jauzjan and Faryab provinces, have also joined the Taliban.

Dostum's deputy joins Taliban

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - In a surprising move, a prominent commander of northern Afghanistan Mohammad Mehdi Naseem, second-in-command to Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, joined Taliban.

In an interview with Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) on telephone from Kandahar, Mehdi Naseem Tuesday said that he along with his more than 5,000 supporters unconditionally decided to switch over to Taliban.

Naseem said in August this year they helped the Taliban in capturing Mazar-i-Sharif, the then opposition capital in the country's north, reported AIP.

Citing reasons for his decision to join the Taliban, Naseem said the Afghan people had rendered all kinds of sacrifices for the establishment of an Islamic government in the country, but unfortunately the Jehadic leaders failed to fulfil their wishes.

Now the Taliban, he added, had succeeded in establishing the Islamic system in Afghanistan and had maintained peace and tranquility by disarming the people.

Mehdi Naseem, who was previously associated with Hizb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar), said the Taliban had crushed the resistance in Darzaab, Faryab and arrested two prominent Uzbek commanders Gen. Lal Mohammad and Gen. Abdal Charik.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

25 NOV 1998

FRONTIER POST

25 NOV 1998

Afghans appreciate radio soap opera

By John Zubrzycki

PESHAWAR: It's a long time since Americans dropped everything for a radio show, as an estimated third of them did for *Amos 'n' Andy* in the 1930s. But, in Kabul, life stops at 7:45 pm three times a week as families tune their radios to the latest episode of *New Home, New Life*.

Many people in the war-torn country bordered by Pakistan and Iran cannot afford to buy bread let alone batteries, but millions listen to the latest adventures of Nazir the slapstick night watchman, Ali Gul the aid worker, and Rabiya the cantankerous housewife. An estimated 83 per cent of people in Kabul tune in at least once a week.

Soap operas and civil wars don't usually go together, especially when the dominant side in the conflict has banned entertainment. After years of civil war, the Taliban controls virtually all of the country.

But, from the high passes of the Hindu Kush to deserts that stretch south from Kandahar, *New Home, New Life* has succeeded in reaching out to Taliban leaders, Uzbek warlords and peasant farmers — thanks often to old Russian-made shortwave radios. The radio drama touches subjects as diverse as the evils of opium poppy cultivation and the need to educate girls.

"The soap opera format is very useful when you have a lot of themes and messages to address," says John Butt, the show's creator and now a consultant to the series. "It also allows us to inject humour into the series, which is very important as there is no other entertain-

ment available to the vast majority of Afghans."

So far, the programme has managed to avoid offending the Taliban, despite its clear agenda on issues such as the right of women to work outside the home and attend school — both of which are forbidden by the Taliban. "All the Taliban I have met have welcomed the programme and are interested in it," says Mr Butt. He leads evaluation teams from Peshawar, where the BBC programme is produced, into Afghanistan every few months to get feedback from listeners and research new themes.

"We are not trying to emancipate. We are trying to educate in the context of Afghan culture and Islam," adds Shirazuddin Siddiqui, the head of the BBC Afghan Education Project. He compares the programme to *A Thousand and One Nights*. Mr Siddiqui heads a team of 170 in Peshawar, including actors and actresses who were household names on Afghan Radio before the civil war.

If the programme's aim is to raise awareness, it appears to be working. One series centred on the archaic tradition of a family giving a daughter to another family as compensation for an unlawful killing.

The *New Home, New Life* team claims the episodes led the Taliban leader Mullah Omar to issue a decree banning the practice.

"We know the Taliban leadership listens to the programme and that some hard-liners don't like it because it is seen as imposing education by outsiders," says Butt.

"But the majority opinion (of the Taliban) is that this is needs-based education, which is necessary for Afghanistan."

Since the first programme aired on April 23, 1994, *New Home, New Life* has developed a national following on a modest budget of \$450,000 a year, funded by the BBC and various UN agencies. Two versions of the 12-minute programme are produced, one in Dari and one in Pashtu, the two most commonly spoken languages in Afghanistan.

Butt, who is fluent in both languages as well as Urdu, says the programme fulfils an important need by keeping Afghans in touch with their past, giving them hope for the future, and helping them cope with the difficult present.

Just how intensely many Afghans follow the dramas of daily life in the fictitious villages of Bar Killi and Kuz Killi became apparent when Ismael Aram, the actor who played Khair Mohammad, a village elder, migrated to Australia.

"As Ismael was leaving, we had to write Khair's death into the script," recalls Siddiqui. "The next thing we knew condolence meetings were being held all over Afghanistan because people thought he had died in real life."

Like the ancient epic that inspired it, *New Home, New Life* looks as if it will be going strong for a thousand and one nights and maybe more. The radio drama's topics range from the evils of growing opium to the need to educate girls. —Dawn/LATS Service (c) *Christian Science Monitor*.

DAWN

25 NOV 1998

Taliban succumb to infighting

By Jason Burke

JALALABAD: On a warm autumn evening, news spread through the bazaars of the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad that Mullah Mohammed Tourabi, minister for justice in the Taliban government, was in town.

An uncompromising hard-liner who lost an eye and a leg in the war against the Russians, Tourabi is the Taliban's chief troubleshooter, stamping out dissent as he travels the 90 per cent of the country under the control of the militia.

By the next morning, the reason for his visit had become clear. Tanks were blocking main roads into the city and cordons of troops hemmed in the populace as identity cards were checked from house to house. By the time Tourabi left, three days later, Jalalabad's jail was so full that detainees were being sent 560 kilometres south to the city of Kandahar.

In the three weeks since Tourabi's reign began, people have been rounded up in villages miles from the nearest road, on the ruined streets of Kabul and around the leafy squares of the western city of Herat. There have even been arrests among front-line troops — including pilots who fly the Taliban's few MiG jet fighters. In a new twist recently, Taliban troops started arresting relatives of wanted men to force those in hiding to give themselves up.

By the time the security forces' job is done — according to one source with access to the Taliban's list of targets — at least 2,000 people will have been incarcerated. Within hours of the first arrests, rumours surfaced that the crack-down had been prompted by an attempted coup against the Taliban — the first since the movement started rampaging through Afghanistan four years ago.

Eventually the authorities admitted a version of the truth. Mullah Sadre Azam, deputy governor of Jalalabad, said a plot to destabilize the country had been smashed. Only 60 people had been arrested, he said, and documents seized from

them revealed their plans.

"They were backed by a foreign power and were aiming to explode bombs and fuel lawlessness before taking control," Azam told *The Observer*. "They wanted to stop us enforcing the law of Islam and stop us fighting crime. They will be tried and sentenced according to Islamic law."

It is almost impossible to know how much of what Azam says is true. Jalalabad is now a city in fear. Few are willing to talk to journalists — and those who do insist on meeting behind closed doors after establishing contact through intermediaries.

Shopkeepers deny all knowledge of arrests — the Taliban watch everyone. And while the Taliban itself is unable to provide proof of the conspiracy, sources among opposition groups in Peshawar, the Pakistani border city that provides refuge for many anti-Taliban activists, say a small group of dissidents in and around Jalalabad were indeed planning some kind of subversive campaign.

"The logic is obvious. For most Afghans, the only good thing about the Taliban is that they have brought peace and security," said one activist. "The way to discredit them is to show that they can't even guarantee that. Then you'll have the support for a change of regime."

But the Taliban have arrested far more people than could have been involved in any such conspiracy. Instead, the regime is using the plot as a pretext for a more general purge. Few of those arrested in Jalalabad appear likely candidates for dangerous militant activities.

Ahmed Ali Khan, a chemist (pharmacist), was among the first wave of detainees. Two armed Taliban came to his shop at noon and told him there were some questions they wanted to ask him. Khan did not struggle and, after locking up his shop, he was driven to the town security office in the back of a pick-up truck.

Friends said Khan's family only found out what had happened to

him recently, when they were ordered to come to the town hospital to give blood. The chemist had been so badly beaten during interrogation that he needed transfusions to stay alive.

All who know the man say he had no involvement in politics at all, let alone a coup plot. He was "straight-forward and honest and a good chemist", according to one colleague. His relatives said he was a quiet, timid man.

When the Taliban came for Abdul Raziq Pacha, a 70-year-old community leader, he was sleeping at home after having lunch. One relative says Pacha was told that "Tourabi wanted to speak to (him)" before being bundled into a car. The relatives reject suggestions that the old man was involved in a violent plot. "It is true that a lot of people came to see him," one said. "But that was just because he was well-respected. There was nothing political in it. We can't work out why they would do this."

One reason is that, despite its hugely successful summer offensive, which shattered the opposition forces in Afghanistan, the Taliban are nonetheless in difficulty. Saudi Arabia, a key source of support, has suspended relations with them, angry at their protection for alleged militant mastermind Osama bin Laden. The Taliban also face grave financial problems. Senior officials have admitted that the movement is broke — a serious problem, as success in Afghanistan depends on bribes as much as on bullets.

And, crucially for the people of Jalalabad, factional splits are beginning to show. Hard-liners led by Mullah Omar — the spiritual head of the Taliban — are increasingly at odds with "moderate" elements.

The victims of the purge largely appear to be supporters of the moderates; the men behind it are almost all hard-liners. Once more it seems Afghans at the bottom are suffering as a result of power struggles at the top. — *Dawn/Observer News Service (c) London Observer.*

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

05 NOV 1998

Taliban negotiate pipeline project with Bidas

Lose interest in UNOCAL corporation

By Mariana Baabar

ISLAMABAD: The Taliban regime in Kabul appears to have lost interest in UNOCAL corporation for the proposed \$3 billion gas pipeline from Turkmenistan into Pakistan.

The Afghans are now finalising discussion with the Argentine firm BRIDAS and say that they are close to clinching a deal with them once the Govt of Pakistan gives the go ahead.

The proposed pipeline for gas transmission from Turkmenistan to Pakistan will cover 1,271km with 48 inches diameter and capacity of 20 billion cubic meters of gas per annum.

Afghan diplomats in Islamabad said on Wednesday that they recently sealed the offices of UNOCAL in Kabul and asked two Pakistani and one Saudi official to leave Afghanistan. However, Western diplomats expressed surprise over this report saying that the UNOCAL office

was still functioning while all Americans at UNOCAL had left Afghanistan before the US missile attack. They cited the growing security concerns and bleak economic prospects of the gas pipeline as reasons for their leaving.

Afghan sources further claim that Chairman of BRIDAS, Carlos Vulgheroni has held meetings both with the President of Turkmenistan and with the Taliban regime. Since the gas pipeline will eventually come into Multan from where the distribution will be made, the go ahead from the Pakistan government is still awaited.

A former PPP minister who had an access to the information when UNOCAL was in the race says that hot words were exchanged by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and former US Ambassador Thomas Simons Jr on the issue. "In one meeting, Simons accused Pakistan of monetary gains from BRIDAS to allow it to win the bid for the gas pipeline.

Taliban to free 105 opposition prisoners

ISLAMABAD, Nov 3: The Taliban said on Tuesday it would release 105 opposition prisoners on Wednesday amid a controversy between the two sides about a possible extension of a temporary ceasefire.

The Taliban-controlled Voice of Shariat radio in the Afghan capital Kabul, monitored in Islamabad, said Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar had issued an order for the release of these prisoners. It said the prisoners came from the northern provinces of Balkh, Faryab, Sar-i-Pul and Jozjan and the central province of Ghor, and were lodged in the southern province of Kandahar.

A week-long truce between the

Taliban and opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood for a prisoner swap ended on Monday with little success, with both sides accusing each other of violations.

An opposition source said on Monday the truce had been extended for two more weeks, but the report was denied by a Taliban spokesman, who said his militia, which controls more than 90 per cent of Afghanistan, could agree to an extension if the other side was sincere about the swap.

The original one-week truce, brokered by an Afghan scientist based in Saudi Arabia, came into force on Oct 29 and was designed to allow the exchange of 1,000 prisoners by each side.—Reuters

Kabul copper mine plan

KABUL, Nov 8: An international consortium will begin assessing copper reserves in Afghanistan shortly and it could lead to the development of the world's largest copper mine, Deputy Mines Minister Abdul Salam Zaeef said on Sunday.

Nine entrepreneurs had signed a memorandum of understanding to develop the mine at Logar, 35 km south of Kabul, which held reserves of 11 billion tonnes, he added.

However, he said the initial tests had been conducted by Russia during its occupation of Afghanistan and needed to be confirmed.

The consortium's engineers were expected to begin assessments within two months as part of a broader one billion dollar investment plan, and report back with final estimates and costs by May next year.

"Historically copper reserves were seen in the vicinity of about 10 million tons but when the Russians arrived they upgraded the resource to 11 billion tons," he said.

"The estimates are the biggest in the world."

The consortium consisted of businessmen from America, South Africa, Britain, France, Germany and Pakistan.

The Escondida copper mine in Chile is currently the biggest producer in the world. It is 57.5 per cent owned by Australia's BHP Co. Ltd.

Zaeef said the Taliban were optimistic about the Logar site because the copper was close to the surface and could be easily accessed through open cut mining.

The Taliban control about 80 percent of Afghanistan following four years of bloody civil war, and the Logar copper mine is ideally placed in terms of roads and security.

"On our part there is no problem with security, it has been established," Zaeef said.

Most of the fighting between the Taliban and opposition forces loyal to Ahmad Shah Masood is concentrated to the north and far north-east of Afghanistan.—AFP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

04 NOV 1998

DAWN

05 NOV 1998

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

07 NOV 1998

Mulla Omar denies UN report on Mazar killings

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Refuting the UN report which accused the Taliban of massacring between 5,000 to 8,000 of their opponents in Mazar-i-Sharif in August, supreme Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar Friday invited the UN to send a fact-finding mission to the area.

In an interview with BBC, he termed the report by the UN human rights special rapporteur Choong-Huan Pak as a pack of lies and unsubstantiated. He said the report was one-sided and biased. He asked the UN to investigate the allegations and come up with a properly documented report.

Meanwhile, senior Taliban spokesman Mulla Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil also refuted the UN report and noted that it wasn't the first time that the Taliban were at the receiving

end of a biased document. He said the rapporteur didn't go to Mazar-i-Sharif and based it on the accounts of so-called survivors who were opposed to the Taliban. He argued that the UN or other human rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch never contacted the Taliban and seldom bothered to get their reaction to allegations against them.

Mutawakil asked as to why did the UN and the human rights groups keep quiet when several thousand Taliban prisoners of war were massacred in Mazar-i-Sharif and Shiberghan last year and buried in mass graves. He explained that a number of opposition fighters and Taliban were killed during fighting for control of Mazar-i-Sharif and other cities in Northern Afghanistan but no civilians or the Shia Hazara minority were specifically targeted.

Afghanistan plans world's largest copper mine

KABUL (AFP) - An international consortium will begin assessing copper reserves in Afghanistan shortly which could lead to the development of the world's largest copper mine, Deputy Mines Minister Abdul Salam Zaeef said Sunday.

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per cent of Afghanistan following four years of bloody civil war, and the Logar copper mine is ideally placed in terms of roads and security.

"On our part there is no problem with security, it has been established," Zaeef said.

Most of the fighting between the Taliban and opposition forces loyal to commander Ahmad Shah Masood is concentrated to the north and far northeast of Afghanistan.

Zaeef said international conglomerate Siemens was involved in the venture but declined to say which companies the remaining businessmen represented.

Further investments included the development of two gold mines near the southern regional capital of Kandahar and in the adjacent province of Zabul.

NATION

09 NOV 1998

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Further investments included the development of two gold mines near the southern regional capital of Kandahar and in the adjacent province of Zabul.

The consortium was also looking at reopening a cement factory at Herat in the southwest, and gas refining in northern Afghanistan.—AFP

Taliban sign accord for oil, gas exploration

ISLAMABAD (NNI)

Taliban have signed an agreement with a Greek company on oil and gas exploration in Afghanistan, reported Bakhtar news agency on Sunday.

Taliban Minister for Mines and Industries Maulvi Ahmed Jan, visiting Greece, is reported to have signed the accord with chief of a Greek company, CCC, after four days of negotiations.

Under the accord, the company would soon start oil and gas exploration in Herat province of Afghanistan.

A delegation of investors from the United States, European countries and South Africa has also recently visited war-ravaged Afghanistan to explore the possibilities of investment in different fields particularly in communication, mines and oil and gas.

Advisor to the Saudi royal family and a prominent Afghan businessman, Syed Jalal, at present in Afghanistan, to broker peace between the warring factions, is said to have recently accompanied a Taliban delegation to Greece.

Source said Jalal has played a key role in signing of the accord between the Taliban and Greek company on oil and gas exploration in Afghanistan.

Taliban leader accuses UN of bias

ISLAMABAD, Nov 6: Taliban supreme Mullah Omar on Friday accused the United Nations of "ill will" after a UN investigator expressed horror at reports that the Taliban massacred 8,000 of its foes and their ethnic kin.

Mullah Mohammad Omar said in a statement that the bodies of 3,500 Taliban had been brought to Kandahar, but the United Nations had made no comment on the movement's own losses at the hands of its foes.

"Where is justice? Thousands of people have been killed and we have brought from the northern provinces over 3,500 bodies to Kandahar, and 1,000 more graves are ready," Omar told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

Omar has repeatedly accused the world body of being biased towards groups based in northern

Afghanistan which oppose its hard-line policies.

It says the U.N. has ignored mass killings of Taliban prisoners taken by Iranian-backed opposition groups, all of which suffered serious military reverses in a Taliban summer campaign.

Omar said the world was using the issues of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, who lives in Afghanistan, opium cultivation and the need for a broad-based government as a pretext to block the Taliban's claim to international recognition.

He said that Bin Laden had lived in Afghanistan before the Taliban takeover in 1996 yet no one had sought to arrest him in that period.

"Nobody picked up the issue at that time but now the issue has been raised as a basis for enmity," he said.—Reuters

FRONTIER POST

16 NOV 1998

DAWN

07 NOV 1998

09 NOV 1998

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Ethnicity only cause of Taliban massacre in northern Afghanistan

WASHINGTON (NNI) - After being attacked twice last year by the Taliban, Mazar-e Sharif could no longer claim to be that battered country's last refuge from the civil war.

But hardly anyone in the dusty city on the northern plains was prepared for what happened when the Taliban took control with a vengeance on their third try.

On August 8 and the days that followed, Taliban militiamen and their allies methodically executed between 2,000 and 5,000 civilians in one of the deadliest mass killings of civilians in two decades of warfare in Afghanistan, according to interviews with witnesses who later fled to Pakistan and reports by international human rights investigators. Taliban militiamen searched house to house for males of fighting age who belonged to the Hazara ethnic minority, says a report in Washington on Sunday.

Hazaras were gunned down in front of their families or had their throats slit. Others, thrown into the city's overcrowded jail, were executed by firing squads or crammed into tractor-trailers, where they sweltered all day in the summer sun - doors shut - until most perished from suffocation or heat stroke. In the evenings, the heavy trucks hauled the bodies to the nearby desert and dumped them in heaps like trash, according to the reports.

Sketchy reports of the slaughter were circulated at the time, but the full extent and the systematic character of the mass murder there have only become known in the months since, as human rights investigators have interviewed survivors who fled to Pakistan and elsewhere.

The killings illustrate how the Afghan civil war has in the past two years turned toward ethnic conflict fed by tribal hatreds and blood revenge.

Although the Taliban fought its way to dominance under a unifying banner of Islam, in ethnic terms its rule represents a return to the pre-communist days of rule by Pashtuns, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group. In taking over Mazar-e Sharif, the Taliban also added a sectarian twist. The Hazara group that was singled out for slaughter is predominantly Shiite Muslim; the Taliban is a Sunni Muslim movement.

In addition, the Taliban's attack on Mazar-e Sharif claimed the lives of nine Iranians, provoking Shiite-dominated Iran to rattle a

big Persian sword on the border, mobilizing tens of thousands of elite troops for military exercises that stretched over an entire month.

William Maley, an Australian specialist on Afghanistan, said that the Mazar-e-Sharif killing was "striking in its viciousness" even by Afghan standards. "What we saw in August was not civilians caught in the cross-fire between combatants, but an orgy of killing driven by racial and religious prejudice," he said.

"Afghanistan is teetering on the edge of major ethnic conflict and perhaps even a genocide," Mazar-e-Sharif had remained the last major city holding out against the Taliban's strict rule of Afghanistan, which has included the imposition of Islamic law and tight controls on women.

But until the shooting started that Saturday morning in August, few residents had any warning that most of the forces defending Mazar-e-Sharif had slipped away overnight or had defected, leaving the city's gates wide open to the Taliban.

Shock troops arriving in pickup trucks and cars fired automatic weapons at everyone in sight, regardless of ethnicity, in an apparent effort to terrorize a rebellious population into submission, witnesses said.

"It didn't matter whether they were small children, women, men or old men. They were just shooting at people," said a Hazara woman now living in Quetta.

Down four broad avenues that radiate from Mazar-e Sharif's central square, antiaircraft guns mounted on parked military trucks sprayed heavy bullets as panicked merchants and shoppers broke into a desperate sprint for safety, according to a Hazara truck driver who watched from an upper floor of a nearby building.

In the bedlam, speeding cars hit some people and raced over the bodies of others felled in the firing. After a few hours, the shooting subsided. Blood stained the walls of shops and residential compounds.

For at least three days, bodies lay where they fell on the orders of the Taliban commander who took charge of the city, witnesses said. It was not until the bodies began to rot and stink in the dry summer heat, threatening disease, that the commander, Manon Niazi, allowed burial of the dead. By then, stray dogs were feeding on the bodies.

Recent interviews of Hazara

refugees -- who did not want to be named for fear of reprisals -- and reports released this month by the United Nations and Human Rights Watch were consistent in their general accounts of the initial indiscriminate killing, followed by days of targeting Hazaras.

An Amnesty International report in September mentioned only the ethnic killings. Officially, the Taliban say none of it happened, although Taliban officials have barred human rights investigators and journalists from Mazar-e-Sharif. The Taliban denounced the report of a UN human rights investigator as "vast propaganda," maintaining that its forces had killed only combatants, confiscated firearms from civilians and temporarily evacuated some residents.

But a former Pakistani intelligence official who visited the city afterward said that large-scale killing did occur -- after quick trials.

"Most of the group executions were carried out by the firing squads after summary Islamic courts found those people guilty of treason," the former intelligence official said. "The treatment meted out . . . was clearly defined in Islamic laws."

The paper quoted refugees as saying that the Taliban were accompanied by Pakistani fighters, identifiable by their language, dress and the flag of a Muslim fundamentalist Pakistani party aligned with the Taliban.

In responding to the UN report, the Taliban also cited the summary executions in May 1997 of an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Taliban prisoners in the Mazar-e-Sharif area. Human rights investigators have concluded that those killings motivated the militia to take revenge. Hazaras, however, were not responsible for the killings.

The newcomers have crowded into run-down motels, dirt-floor basements and, in some cases, mosques. The financially strapped office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees here has been able to provide limited aid to no more than 150 destitute families. Despite their desperate circumstances, some refugees talked of revenge. A doctor who fled from south of Mazar-e Sharif, for instance, quoted a Hazara proverb about a defeated people rising to fight back. "When the glass is broken, it is getting sharper," he said. "We are the broken glass."

Taliban to re-open six precious stones mines

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - Taliban are expected to re-open six precious stones mines in eastern Nangarhar province in the near future, it was learnt on good authority.

The six mines, having huge deposits of world class ruby, are located at Jagdalek near Nangarhar provincial capital city of Jalalabad. The mines were closed after the Taliban forces captured the eastern Afghan province in 1996. Before Nangarhar's fall to the hard-line student militia, these mines were operated by the administration of Haji Abdul Qadeer, the then governor Nangarhar.

Afghan sources here said that the Taliban authorities were negotiating with a Peshawar-based firm, specialising in precious stones mining and marketing, to give the six mines on lease. However, the period of the proposed lease could not be known.

The sources said that in addition to paying a mutually agreed amount for the lease, the Taliban administration would also charge the firm 10 per cent export tax at the rate of total value of each consignment at Torkham border as the rubies would be exported to the international market from Peshawar, where the firm's headquarters are located.

It is instructive to recall here that Peshawar is the biggest business center of precious and semi-precious stones. The precious stones found in Afghanistan are

also marketed at the international level from Peshawar which receives the bulk of these gems not only from different parts of NWFP and Northern Areas, but also from eastern, central and northern parts of war-battered Afghanistan.

The Panjsher valley of Ahmad Shah Masood's fame has huge deposits of world class emeralds. That's why, export of emeralds and other precious stones is the main source of the legendary Tajik commander's income.

Similarly, Afghanistan is the world's largest exporter of lapis which is found in abundance in Badakhshan. It either reaches the world market through direct exports or through Pakistani markets mainly located in Peshawar.

Gem dealers in Peshawar's Namak Mandi business district informed that there was shortage of top quality emeralds (of Panjsher origin) in the market, due to which export of this particular stone was coming down.

"Following the latest upheavals in Afghanistan which saw Masood-led opposition forces routed in most parts of the country, Masood has re-routed his export consignments. Instead of Pakistan, he is exporting the stones through more friendly countries like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for onward transportation to Poland and the European markets," said an Afghan source.

Taliban rule out power sharing

UN special mission to Afghanistan James Ngobi, the two sides deliberated upon political issues, focusing on human rights. The second meeting discussed humanitarian activities in the war-torn country. "We urged the UN officials to send their international staff to Afghanistan under the security agreement signed in Islamabad on Oct 23," Mutawakil said.

The agreement had made Taliban bound to provide full protection to the UN staff and premises and investigate into the killing of three UN officials in Kabul and the eastern city of Jalalabad this year.

Mutawakil said that two suspects, Pakistani nationals, have been arrested in connection with the attack on the UN official in Kabul and are being questioned in Taliban's headquarters of Kandahar. He said these Pakistanis have not confessed the killing. He said Taliban have fulfilled more of the conditions in the 11-point of agreement.

UN COORDINATOR: Erick de Mul, the new United Nations resident and humanitarian coordinator for Afghanistan met for the first time with Mullah Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil and other representatives of the Taliban administration at the Afghan Embassy here on Friday.—NNI/APP

ISLAMABAD, Nov 28: The Taliban have ruled out possibility of power sharing with other factions saying they have already given "substantial" representation to the ethnic communities. "The idea of broad-based government floated by the world community, including the 'six plus two' group, has shortcomings and is of no worth for us," Maulvi Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil, adviser to the Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar said on Saturday.

Talking to NNI the Taliban leader said the Islamic militia has accepted several "points of understanding" reached in the "six plus two" group's meeting in New York in September but the point of broad-based government has faults.

Mutawakil, also Taliban senior spokesman, arrived in Islamabad on Thursday for talks with the Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov, which was first high-level contact between the two sides. Taliban leader also met the UN officials and Pakistan Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz.

UN-TALIBAN TALKS: Taliban, he said, held two meetings with Islamabad-based United Nations officials and discussed political issues and matters relating to humanitarian activities. In the first meeting with the acting chief of the

Taliban rule out power sharing with other factions

ISLAMABAD (NNI) – Afghanistan's dominant Taliban have ruled out possibility of power sharing with other factions saying they have already given "substantial" representation to the ethnic communities.

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In an exclusive interview with this agency, the Taliban leader said the Islamic militia has accepted several "Points of Understanding" reached in the "Six Plus Two" group's meeting in New York in September but the point of broad-based government has faults.

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Taliban, he said, held two meetings with Islamabad-based United Nations officials and discussed with them political issues and matters relating to humanitarian activities. In the first meeting with the Acting Chief of the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan James Ngobi, the two sides deliberated upon political issues, focussing on human rights. The second meeting discussed humanitarian activities in the war-torn country. "We urged the UN officials to send their international staff to Afghanistan under the security agreement signed in Islamabad on October 23," Mutawakkil said.

The agreement had made Taliban bound to provide full protection to the UN staff and premises and investigate into the killing of three UN officials

in Kabul and the eastern city of Jalalabad this year. The UN and foreign NGOs pulled out their international staff from Kabul after an Italian UN worker was shot dead in Kabul by an angry mob on August 21. The demonstrators were protesting against the US cruise missile strikes in Afghanistan.

Mutawakkil said that two suspect Pakistani nationals have been arrested in connection with the attack on the UN official in Kabul and are being questioned in Taliban's headquarters of Kandahar. He said these Pakistanis have not confessed the killing. He said Taliban have fulfilled more of the conditions in the 11-point of agreement. He said the UN officials expressed satisfaction over the Taliban-Uzbekistan talks, reducing tension with Iran and peace efforts of a Saudi-based Afghan trader Syed Jalal.

To a question about Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, the Taliban leader said Afghanistan's supreme court has disposed off the case of Osama after failure of the United States of America and others to produce evidence against him in the specified period. "Only Amirul Momineen Mullah Omar can now re-open Osama's case," he said. Mutawakkil said Taliban had not accepted a videocassette as evidence by the United States as it contained only news, documentaries aired by the CNN and newspapers' clippings. He said American officials in Islamabad delivered the cassette and clippings to the Afghan embassy.

Talking about his talks with the Uzbek Foreign Minister, Mutawakkil described the meeting as successful. He said Taliban invited the Uzbek Foreign Minister to visit Afghanistan. The two sides stressed the need for more contacts in future. "On invitation to Taliban for the forthcoming meeting of the '6+2' in Tashkent, we expressed readiness to attend if invited as government. But if the invitation is

extended as a group, then the leaders will decide whether to attend or not".

About foreign investment, Taliban leader said his government has recently negotiated with foreign investment in the war-battered country and signed agreements with a couple of companies. He said agreement has been inked with Chinese and American firms for reviving Afghanistan telecommunication system, which has been destroyed in the 20 years of war. Another agreement has been signed with a joint Greek and Saudi company for gas and oil exploration. A group of investors from Britain, Germany, United States and France visited Kabul last week and explored avenues for investment in Afghanistan.

About Iranian diplomats' killing, Mutawakkil said there has been no progress in the investigation into the killing of Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist by renegade Taliban fighters in the northern town of Mazar-e-Sharif. He said an investigation team, led by Taliban Interior Minister NGOs Khairulla NGOs, is probing the case. The team has so far not succeeded to apprehend the culprits. Iranian diplomats and journalist were killed when Taliban stormed Iranian consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif on August 8.

He said a team of Iranian diplomats recently visited Afghanistan and held low level talks with local Taliban authorities to improve bilateral ties. The Iranian team also inspected buildings of Iran's embassy in Kabul and consulates in several Afghan cities. Taliban closed Iranian embassy after they captured Kabul in September 1996. Taliban, he said, want cordial relations with Iran "but Tehran attitude towards Taliban has been negative". He urged Iranian leaders to change their policies towards Afghanistan. He said Taliban tried to hold talks with Iran through the United Nations but they rejected the offer.

Taliban slam US price for Osama

By Anwar Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Taliban militia Thursday denounced a US reward for capturing Osama bin Laden, a suspect in the bombing of US embassies in East Africa.

On Wednesday a US district court indicted Osama and a top aide and the US State Department announced a reward of up to five million dollars for his capture.

"The reward is an inducement to terrorism," a Taliban spokesman told the Afghan Islamic Press news agency.

Spokesman Wakil Ahmed told the agency that the United States has failed to give any evidence to the Afghan government to support its allegations against Osama.

The Taliban government has set up a judicial inquiry against Osama and asked the United States and other nations to send evidence

SSP threatens retaliation

ISLAMABAD: Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan on Thursday threatened to retaliate if Osama bin Laden is arrested, and described Washington's No. 1 enemy as a "hero" to Muslims worldwide.

"It is a challenge to the entire Muslim world ... Osama is a hero of the Muslim world," said Omar Warsi, a leader of Sipah-e-Sahaba. "If anything happens to him, America will be responsible." — AP

against him. The Taliban have promised to prosecute him if found guilty.

The previous Afghan government of Burhanuddin Rabbani had given refuge to Osama in Afghanistan but

the current Taliban rulers have also adopted him as a guest.

A Saudi dissident, Osama, has also lived in Sudan after fleeing Saudi Arabia for trying to topple the ruling monarchy.

Authorities in Saudi Arabia and the United States also blamed him for bombing a US military barrack in the Arab kingdom in June 1996 that killed 26 people.

On Wednesday Saudi interior minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz said his government found no evidence of Osama's involvement in the bombing of the US military barrack.

But Washington also blamed Osama's Al-Qaeda group for the August 7 bombings of US embassies in East Africa that killed 224 people, including 12 Americans.

On August 20 the United States retaliated by firing Tomahawk cruise missiles at targets in Afghanistan and Sudan. At least 26 people were killed at a Taliban base in Eastern Afghanistan.

"The reward is not only an encouragement to terrorism but it also shows that the United States is taking to the path of terrorism that it has so often vowed to fight," said the Taliban spokesman.

A spokesman for the US embassy in Islamabad said they were not taking extraordinary precautions after the indictment. "The security around the embassy and other US installations is already tight and we have already urged US citizens to avoid non-essential travels to Pakistan," he said.

Expulsion of Afghan refugees Taliban ask UN to stop Iran

ISLAMABAD, Nov 4: The Taliban on Wednesday called on the United Nations to persuade Iran not to expel hundreds of thousands of illegal Afghan refugees, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

"The UN should take immediate notice of Iran's move," the Islamabad-based private information service quoted a Taliban spokesman as saying.

The expulsion will lead to "tragic" results as the Afghan government lacks the necessary resources to rehabilitate the refugees, the spokesman, Wakil Ahmad, told AIP from Kandahar.

The Taliban government has taken up the issue with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, urging the agency to arrange food and accommodation for the refugees in Afghanistan if the UN is unable to convince Tehran, AIP said. "Expelling refugees at a time when the winter season has started

is a condemnable act," the Taliban official said.

AIP quoted Afghan ambassador to Pakistan, Maulvi Saeedur Rehman, as saying that 60 Afghan refugees had been killed in Iran in recent months.

The ambassador also accused the Iranian authorities of arresting thousands of Afghans.

Iran said on Saturday it had given hundreds of thousands of illegal Afghan refugees three weeks to leave the country.

Iranian interior ministry official Hassan-Ali Ebrahimi said the Afghans must report to the ministry by Nov 21 and the government would then issue exit permits in Mashhad in Khorasan province, which borders Afghanistan.

Returning refugees will each be given 40 dollars, a blanket and 50 kilos of wheat for their journey home as an incentive to return.

Iran shelters around two million Afghan refugees.—AFP

FRONTIER POST

06 NOV 1998

Taliban slam US reward offer for Osama

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Afghanistan's Taliban Islamic militia Thursday denounced a five-million dollar reward offered by the United States for the arrest of Osama bin Laden, calling it an inducement to terrorism.

"The US has failed to give the Afghan government any evidence to support its allegations against Bin Laden who is living in Afghanistan as a guest of the Taliban," a spokesman for the Islamic militia said.

"The reward is not only an encouragement to terrorism but it also shows that the US is taking to the path of terrorism that it has so often vowed to fight," the spokesman, Wakil Ahmad, told the Afghan Islamic Press.

Taliban leaders have previously said the militia could try the Saudi dissident in Afghanistan if they received credible proof of his complicity in terrorism. They have refused US demands to hand over the multi-millionaire.

The US State Department has announced a reward of up to five million dollars for information leading to the arrest of Bin Laden and his military commander Mohammad Atef.

The two were indicted in the US on Wednesday for the August 7 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that killed more than 200 people, including 12 Americans.

On August 20 the US launched cruise missile attacks on alleged terrorist bases of Bin Laden inside Afghanistan in the eastern Khost region close to the Pakistan border.

NNI adds: The Counter-Terrorism Rewards Programme was recently revised by Congress and signed by the US President to increase the maximum amount of a reward offer from \$2 million to \$5 million.

07 NOV 1998

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Taliban disown representative

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The Taliban-led Afghan government has disowned one Mulla Abdul Qayyum Haqqani claiming to be the representative of the Taliban.

Afghanistan's ambassador in Pakistan, Mulla Saeedur Rahman Haqqani, in a statement said Mulla Abdul Qayyum Haqqani was neither a representative of the Taliban nor they agreed with his views.

He referred to a recent statement by this person in a Taliban conference in Dera Ismail Khan in which he reportedly claimed that the Taliban would soon hoist their white flag in Islamabad and said these didn't represent the Taliban views. "This person is a Pakistan hailing from Lakki Marwat and is presently running a madressa, Jamia Abu Huraire, in Badrashi in Nowshera district. His statements could create misconceptions about the Taliban as we don't want to lose a friendly country like Pakistan," the Afghan ambassador explained.

Taliban delegation woos Qatar govt

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Taliban Foreign Minister, Mulla Hassan Akhund has held talks with his Qatari counterpart in Doha, reports Bakhtar news agency on Tuesday.

Hassan who at the head of a high level delegation is visiting Qatar also called on the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and other high ranking officials of the Qatar Foreign Ministry.

The visit is being described as very significant in the wake of efforts of the student militia to seek support and win recognition of at least Muslim countries.

Though Taliban have recently made big achievements at military front yet they are still empty handed at diplomatic front. They had recently suffered a serious set back at diplomatic front when Saudi Arabia, one of the key supporters of student militia withdrew its support by calling back its diplomat from Kabul and asking the Taliban Charge d' Affairs to leave Riyadh.

Taliban shore up foreign relations

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban authorities Thursday announced moves to shore up their few remaining links with the outside world but stood by Saudi dissident and alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden who has taken refuge within Afghanistan's borders. Foreign minister Mulla Mohammad Hassan told journalists that ties with the United Arab Emirates would be maintained, with economic ties bolstered to reconstruct the war-torn country. He added that negotiations could be initiated with Saudi Arabia, where relations soured after the Taliban refused to deport bin Laden, who has been indicted in the United States. "Our talks in Qatar were positive and fruitful," he said after returning from a mission to the UAE.

FRONTIER POST

20 NOV 1998

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18 NOV 1998

Taliban disallow Iranian team in Mazar

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - The Taliban authorities have denied permission to a visiting Iranian delegation to visit northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

It is the first visit by Iranian diplomats to Afghanistan, after their relations soured when nine Iranian, including a Journalist, were killed in the Mazar at the time of Taliban's takeover of the former opposition bastion in the country's north.

The delegation, sources said, had desired to meet the Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. Although there were no immediate reports of a Taliban nod to the request, but keeping the present state of relations between the two countries, such a meeting could not be ruled out.

It is worth mentioning here that a four-member high level Iranian delegation, who is currently visiting Afghanistan, recently travelled to Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Kabul.

Among others, the delegation comprise Raza Behrami, the Iranian consul general in Jalalabad and vice consul at Herat consulate.

The motives of the Iranian diplomats' visit to the war-battered country has stirred a lot of controversy.

The Peshawar-based Afghan Islamic Press few days back had reported that the delegation had held talks with Taliban in Kandahar and it was trying to get an appointment for the Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi with Taliban movement founder Mullah Omar.

On the other hand, the Iranian Consulate in Peshawar denied the reports that it was holding any po-

litical dialogue with Taliban and instead said: "an Iranian technical group has gone to Afghanistan for preparing a report on the condition of Iranian properties".

Sources close to Taliban confided to *The Frontier Post* that Taliban did not grant permission to the visiting Iranian delegation to go to Mazar-i-Sharif.

During the visit, the Iranians held talks with Taliban leaders and discussed Iran-Afghanistan relations, added the sources. But the local Taliban leaders avoided to discuss the core issues with the Iranians and advised them to contact their high command, revealed these sources.

Interestingly, the Taliban leaders were not available to comment on the issue and refrained from issuing comments on it either.

The tone of Iranian foreign office's statement about the killings of its diplomats in Mazar on August 7 last, Tuesday broadcasted by Radio Tehran was slightly mild.

The timing as well as the composition of the visiting Iranian delegation contradicts the clarification of Iranian consulate, commented an observer.

Different theories are in circulation among the Peshawar-based Afghans in this regard. One theory suggests that the Iranians wanted to judge the impact of its military pressure and analyze the attitude of Taliban leadership.

While the other said the Iranians were aspiring for quite some time to establish direct contacts with the Taliban leadership.

Others are of the opinion that by sending a delegation, Iran wanted to keep the Taliban busy in political negotiations, and to buy time for the opposition to sharpen their teeth.

FRONTIER POST

19 NOV 1998

Taliban accuse Tajikistan of supporting Masood

By TANVEER ISMAIL

PESHAWAR - Accepting the Taliban defeats at the hands of the Northern Alliance forces in certain northern provinces, the head of the Taliban Information Ministry in Kabul, Mullah Amir Khan Mutaqqi, has attributed them to an open military and monetary support to Commander Ahmad Shah Masud by Tajikistan and other countries of the region.

In an interview on satellite telephone from Kabul with Waliullah Saleem, Director, Peshawar-based private Sahaar News Agency of Afghanistan on Thursday evening, Mullah Mutaqqi said that despite certain defeats, the front line of the Taliban in Khinjan and Qundooz had remained intact.

Explaining his point, he said that the Masud Militia and the forces of the Northern Alliance were receiving in huge quantity arms and ammunition and monetary support from Tajikistan, Iran and certain other countries of the region. It was the reason, he said, that the Taliban had met defeats in some of the northern territories.

To a question about reported rifts between Mullah Umer, the Qandahar-based spiritual head of the Taliban, and Mullah Rabbani, the key figure of the

Taliban administration in Kabul, he said that neither Mullah Rabbani had tendered resignation nor he was under house-arrest, nor he had been dismissed from his portfolio.

He, however, said that Mullah Rabbani was in Qandahar with the Amir-ul-Momineen, Mullah Umer. He added that the reports of the former's removal was a part of disinformation of the enemies to shatter down the morale of the Taliban fighters.

About the presence of Osama ben Laden in the Taliban held territory, Mutaqqi declared mere propaganda a report from the Northern Alliance that the Taliban had pitched 18 million Afghan people against the United States of America and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the question of Osama.

He said that the Taliban justice court had already exonerated of all charges the Saudi dissident millionaire, Osama ben Laden finding no evidence from any part of the world against his alleged involvement in terrorist activities and use of Afghanistan soil.

"We did not invite Osama to Afghanistan rather he came to Afghanistan during Ustad Rabbani's rule in Kabul on the advice of the Americans and the

government of Sudan," he said. "We will not ask Osama to leave Afghanistan as he is our guest in accordance with the rich cultural norms and traditions of the people of Afghanistan," he further said.

When his attention was drawn towards a charge leveled against the Taliban by the Iranian envoy in Paris, Dr. Dehqani, wherein it was said that the Taliban fighters had burnt down about 35,000 rare Persian and Afghan books of the cultural centre of Hakim Nasir Khusro when they captured Pul-e-Khizri in Baghlan province.

Mutaqqi out-rightly rejected the charge, saying that they did not set on fire any book of the library as they respected the educational and cultural heritage of their nation.

He, however, accepted that the Taliban after capturing the province had removed only that literature and books from Hakim Nasir Khusro cultural centre which carried material against the very belief of the Taliban and were misguiding the people.

He also made it clear that this material was shifted to another place but it had not been burnt down as was alleged by Dr. Dehqani.

Osama's involvement in terrorism

Taliban ask US to prove charges by 20th

KABUL, Nov 9: The Taliban on Monday set a Nov 20 deadline for the United States to prove Osama bin Laden was a terrorist and said he would be cleared if it failed to do so.

"If there is no proof submitted against Bin Laden, then he is innocent. We cannot wait forever for this drama," the Taliban's chief justice, Noor Mohammad Saqid, told reporters.

"We will listen to both sides' statements," he said. "The one who makes the claims must present his witnesses and prove the case against the accused, otherwise he will fail."

The chief justice, a man in his early 30s who has held the post for seven months, promised the procedure would deliver "100 per cent justice".

Bin Laden is alleged to have masterminded the August bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania which killed hundreds, and has been living in Afghanistan as a "guest" of the Taliban.

The Taliban's senior spokesman, Wakil Ahmad, said the movement would continue to refuse US requests for his extradition. "We will never give him (Bin Laden) up to a third party for trial or any-

thing else," he told the Afghan Islamic Press.

The United States has offered a reward of five million dollars for the arrest of Bin Laden and in August attacked with Cruise missiles what it said were Bin Laden's training camps in southern Afghanistan.

The chief justice did not say what punishment Bin Laden might expect if found guilty by the supreme court.

He said the Taliban gave a Nov 20 deadline for proof of Bin Laden's involvement in militancy. Bin Laden's presence is one of several reasons the United Nations has failed to recognize the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan.

Bin Laden became America's public enemy number one after the embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam on Aug 7 in which at least 263 people, including 12 Americans, died.

Bin Laden has lived in Afghanistan for several years after taking part in the war against Soviet occupation.

He is thought to reside somewhere close to Kandahar, where almost all the Taliban leadership resides.—Reuters

Taliban refuse extradition of Osama

CAIRO (AFP) - The Taliban militia is refusing to extradite terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden but is prepared to put him on trial in Afghanistan for the August US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, a Taliban official said.

"Any trial of bin Laden must take place in Afghanistan, which is a sovereign land with a legitimate judicial system," Taliban spokesman Wakil Ahmed said in an interview published here Friday in the Al-Hayat newspaper.

Bin Laden "will remain a guest in Afghanistan (and) will not be handed over to anyone," Ahmed said.

"If the Americans have proof of his involvement in terrorist operations, why don't they give it to the High Islamic Court" established by the Taliban, he said, adding that bin Laden is "forbidden from all political activity."

The fundamentalist militia said Thursday that the United States offer of five million dollars for bin Laden's arrest over the August bombings that left at least 250 people dead was an incitement to further terrorism.

FRONTIER POST

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Osama will not be handed over to US: Omar

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar has said his government is not prepared to hand over Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden to the United States even if it meant recognition for the Taliban as the legitimate authority in Afghanistan.

"It has now become clear that Washington would recognise the Taliban-led Afghan government if it agreed to extradite Bin Laden to the US," he said in an interview with 'The News' from his movement's headquarters in Kandahar in southwestern Afghanistan.

Mulla Omar complained that the whole issue of international recognition for the Taliban government now revolved round the person of Bin Laden. "This seems to be the only hurdle to winning recognition for the Taliban as other issues like respect for human and women's rights and control of drug-trafficking by the Taliban are no longer mentioned as vigorously as in the past," he said.

The Taliban supreme leader argued that it meant the student militia have fulfilled all other conditions

and would be allowed to represent Afghanistan at the UN and other world bodies as soon as they extradited Bin Laden to the US. He was also critical of the UN and the Western countries for blindly following the US policy on not recognising the Taliban government.

Announcing support for Afghanistan's Chief Justice, Noor Mohammad Saqib's statement in which he set a November 20 deadline for the US to prove that Bin Laden was a terrorist, Mulla Omar said Washington's failure to do so would mean that Bin Laden was innocent. He said the indictment order deposited in an American court accusing Bin Laden of involvement in acts of terrorism wasn't enough of an evidence. He made it clear Afghanistan's Shariat Court functioned independently of the government and was empowered to punish even someone like Bin Laden.

The US State Department spokesman, James Rubin, responding to the Taliban deadline of November 20, said in Washington Monday that there could be no expiration date on terrorist acts of this kind. He said the facts mentioned in

the indictment order speak for themselves. According to him, the real issue was as to why the Taliban continue to provide safe haven to Bin Laden. He said the US government had made it clear to Taliban on several occasions that they must stop harbouring "well-known terrorists" like Bin Laden. He also stressed the need for bringing Bin Laden to justice swiftly.

It may be added that the US government recently announced a \$5 million reward each for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of Bin Laden and Mohammad Atef, referred to as his military commander by Washington.

Meanwhile, joint delegations of the Taliban and former defence minister Ahmad Shah Masud have gone to areas controlled by the two sides to prepare lists of prisoners of war for a possible exchange of prisoners in future.

The two delegations were formed on the initiative of Syed Jalal, an Afghan businessman and intellectual based in Saudi Arabia, who has been mediating between the Taliban and their opponents. Syed Jalal has already secured exchange of some prisoners between the two sides.

Taliban for evidence against Osama within 10 days

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR—Afghanistan's Chief Justice Maulvi Noor Mohammad Saqib has asked those who charge Osama Bin Laden with harbouring terrorism to provide solid evidences in this connection within 10 days otherwise, they would acquit him honourably.

"We believe in a united Afghanistan and those who are involved in criminal acts could be dealt with an iron hand but the complainant must provide solid proofs," he remarked in an interview published by local Pushto daily *Wahdat* on Monday. He informed that Amirul Momineen Mullah Mohammad Omer has issued a declaration saying each and every one can submit

solid proofs in favour of his charges against Osama Bin Laden before the justice department. "If Osama was found guilty," he would face punishment under the Islamic laws," he added. Maulvi Noor Mohammad Saqib denounced the American's reward of five million dollars for the arrest of Osama and said that through it the Americans are further promoting terrorism.

Maulvi Saqib said that Maulvi Mohammad Omer had directed them to invite solid proofs against Osama Bin Laden. The Islamic movement is determined to restore a peaceful and crime-free atmosphere in Afghanistan and in this connection, the Islamic Shariah is being followed without any discrimination.

Taliban extend deadline for Osama's trial

KABUL (NNI) — The Supreme Court of Taliban student militia, in an emergency meeting, has decided to extend the deadline by ten days for the trial of Saudi dissident, Osama Bin Laden, reports Bakhtar news agency on Saturday.

Earlier the Taliban supreme leader, Mulla Muhammad Omar Mujahid, had empowered the Afghan Supreme Court to try Bin Laden and fix a date for the hearing of the case.

The Supreme Court after threadbare discussion on the issue had fixed November 20 as deadline for production and submission of evidences against Osama Bin Laden.

The Taliban Supreme Court has now made ten days extension in the deadline. Under the new decision, November 30 has now been set as the deadline.

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FRONTIER POST

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Taliban extend deadline for Osama's trial

KABUL (NNI) - The Supreme Court of Taliban student militia, in an emergency meeting, has decided to extend the deadline by ten days for the trial of Saudi dissident, Osama Bin Laden, reports Bakhtar news agency Saturday.

Earlier the Taliban supreme leader, Mulla Muhammad Omar Mujahid, had empowered the Afghan Supreme Court to try Bin Laden and fix a date for the hearing of the case.

The Supreme Court after threadbare discussion on the issue had fixed November 20 as deadline for production and submission of evidences against Osama Bin Laden.

The Taliban Supreme Court has now made ten days extension in the deadline. Under the new decision, November 30 has now been set as the deadline. The decision to extend the deadline, according to sources, has been made to facilitate those having authentic and concrete documentary evidences about the involvement of Osama

Bin Laden in the terrorist activities.

The move is particularly aimed at the United States, which has accused the Saudi dissident Osama Bin Laden and his colleague, Muhammad Asif, of having hands in US embassies bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.

The Taliban Supreme Court has strongly condemned the United States for announcing a reward of \$5 million for the arrest or killing of Bin Laden. It said that instead of presenting evidences against Osama, the United States is still running baseless and false propaganda campaign against him.

The US authorities have been asked to come forward with authentic evidences against Osama and submit them to the Afghan Supreme Court.

If the United States and others fail to produce evidences against Laden by November 30, the Saudi millionaire dissident would be absolved of all the charges, the agency said.

Taliban await evidence against Osama

DOHA (AFP) - The Taliban government in Afghanistan is still waiting for the United States to provide evidence implicating Osama bin Laden in anti-American attacks, a Taliban official said here Thursday.

"The Islamic tribunal gave all parties two months to present evidence on bin Laden's possible involvement in attacks or explosions, but we are still waiting," Taliban Foreign Minister Mullah Mohamad Hassan said in Qatar.

"The United States say they have documents proving bin Laden's involvement in two attacks against American embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam," he told the Qatari news agency.

"We're telling them that they must present this evidence to the Islamic court and we will then try bin Laden," said Hassan after a meeting with senior Qatari officials.

Courts in the United States have accused bin Laden, a billionaire who was stripped of his Saudi nationality, of carrying out two bombings against the US em-

bassies in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7 that left 250 dead.

Washington has offered a reward of five million dollars for his capture.

The Taliban said earlier this month they were ready to try bin Laden in Afghanistan and have given Washington until Friday to provide evidence against him.

In Kabul, on arrival in the Afghan capital, Mulla Mohammad Hassan Akhund told journalists said the November 20 deadline set by the militia for Washington to furnish evidence against its number one enemy, Osama bin Laden, was not likely to be extended.

He said that only the militia's supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar could extend the deadline, and only if he wanted to.

There has been plenty of time and "if anybody had any evidence they could have forwarded this," he said, referring to accusations against bin Laden.

"This decision is up to Amirul-Momenin to extend it," Hassan said in regards to any extension.

NATION

Taliban refuse extradition, offer to try Laden themselves

CAIRO (AFP) - The Taliban militia is refusing to extradite Osama bin Laden but is prepared to put him on trial in Afghanistan for the August US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, a Taliban official said.

"Any trial of bin Laden must take place in Afghanistan, which is a sovereign land with a legitimate judicial system," Taliban spokesman Wakil Ahmed said in an interview published here Friday in the *Al-Hayat* newspaper. Bin Laden "will remain a guest in Afghanistan (and) will not be handed over to anyone," Wakil said. "If the Americans have proof of his involvement in terrorist operations, why don't they give it to the High Islamic Court" established by Taliban, he said, adding that bin Laden is "forbidden from all political activity." The militia said on Thursday that the United States offer of \$5 million for bin Laden's arrest over the August bombings that left at least 250 people dead was an incitement to further terrorism.

No extension in deadline for Osama's trial

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - The Taliban Chief Justice, Noor Mohammad Saqqib, has strongly denied reports about extension in the deadline for Osama bin Laden's trial in Afghanistan.

Recently, a news item appeared in the Pakistani press that Taliban had extended the deadline by ten days for the trial of Osama.

Earlier, Mullah Mohammad Omer Mujahid, the Taliban supreme leader, had empowered the Afghan Supreme Court to try Osama and fix a date for hearing of the case.

In an interview with a local Pushto daily, Noor Mohammad Saqqib said that the Supreme Court had not granted ten days extension in the deadline for the production evidence against Osama.

It is noteworthy that earlier Taliban had set November 20 as deadline for submitting of evidence against the Saudi dissident, now living in exile in Afghanistan.

Saqqib added that Afghan Supreme Court decision was final in this regard.

He added that no further extension in the deadline was under consideration and November 20 was the last date for production of proof against Osama.

FRONTIER POST

20 NOV 1993

06 NOV 1993

FRONTIER POST 16 NOV 1993

Taliban shore up foreign relations as deadline on Osama expires

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban authorities Thursday announced moves to shore up their few remaining links with the outside world but stood by Osama bin Laden who has taken refuge within Afghanistan's borders.

Foreign Minister Mulla Mohammad Hassan told journalists that ties with the United Arab Emirates would be maintained, with economic ties bolstered to reconstruct the war-torn country.

He added that negotiations could be initiated with Saudi Arabia, where relations soured after the Taliban refused to deport Osama, who has been indicted in the United States.

"Our talks in Qatar were positive and fruitful," he said after returning from a mission to the UAE.

He said talks focussed on obstacles to the Taliban gaining recognition as the legitimate leaders of Afghanistan. These included issues of drugs, human rights, terrorism and Osama bin Laden.

The Taliban has told Washington it has until Friday to produce evidence supporting claims that Osama was involved with the August 7 bombings of two US embassies in East Africa which left 224 people dead.

Washington has posted a five million dollar reward for Osama's capture and arrest. The dissident is understood to be still living in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar where he remains a guest of the Taliban.

Hassan said no evidence had been forwarded to support the terrorist allegations and only the Taliban's supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar can extend the deadline.

He maintained the Taliban's record on human rights was an improvement over previous governments, that strict drug controls had been enforced and that terrorist activities had subsided under the Shariat administration.

Any arguments to the contrary were the result of propaganda put forward by countries opposed to the Taliban gaining international recognition, he said.

Asked whether the Taliban would enter talks with countries on an individual basis as part of a strategy to gain wider acceptance, Hassan said: "By the assistance of God Almighty we will take steps in that direction."

Osama must be tried: Masood

Osama bin Laden is the 'mastermind of crimes' and must stand trial, the official spokesman for Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood said Thursday.

NATION

20 NOV 1998

The spokesman, Mohammad Aref, said the billionaire should leave Afghanistan and also accused him of actively collaborating in the Taliban military operations.

His comments came on the eve of the expiry of a Taliban deadline after which Osama could be locally cleared of allegations that he had a hand in terrorism if Washington did not produce evidence in support of an indictment.

"We believe he is the mastermind of crimes and must be tried," Aref said.

"It doesn't matter for us against whom his crimes are directed. We condemn the crimes in their essence," he added.

Aref said Osama 'lives illegally' in Afghanistan and he should be deported to a third country.

Taliban term claims on Osama invalid

DAWN

24 NOV 1998

KABUL, Nov 20: The Taliban "The Islamic emirate (Taliban) said on Friday its deadline for the wants to have good relations with world to submit evidence against the US and the world's Osama bin Laden had expired and countries...and in principle is pre- any further pursuit of him would pared for any kind of cooperation," be seen as a pretext to attack Muttaqi said.

Afghanistan.

"But on the contrary if anyone "Our deadline for Osama's case tries to jeopardize relations and has ended. Any claim after that is raises again Osama's case, then it invalid," a spokesman for the means that Osama's issue is being Taliban, Mr Abdul Hai Mutmaen, used against the emirate and it will said.

He told the Afghan Islamic Press Sources close to the Taliban said (AIP) that since no proof had been that the movement's supreme submitted to the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, court, the Saudi could not be a met chief justice Noor Mohammad "terrorist". Saqeb in Kandahar to discuss the

"Our court is an Islamic court. If Bin Laden dispute. anyone had proof that Osama was a They said the chief justice told terrorist they would have submit- Omar that no evidence had been ted their proof, but nobody did. given to the Taliban, whose govern- That means he is not a terrorist." ment is recognized only by

The Taliban said in a statement Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the that it had met its obligation by United Arab Emirates. offering to try Bin Laden under Bin Laden, who lives as a "guest" Islamic law if states seeking his in Taliban-held territory, is wanted extradition submitted proof by Nov by the United States for allegedly masterminding the bombing of US 20.

"If from now onwards, the issue embassies in Kenya and Tanzania of Osama is raised again, then that in August which killed 263 people. means, they want to find excuses The Taliban refused repeated for resenting the Afghans," Amir US demands to hand over Bin Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban's infor- Laden and set a six-week deadline mation and culture minister, said of Nov 20 for countries to submit in the statement. proof that he was involved in terrorism.—Reuter

NATION

01 NOV 1993

Masood asks Taliban to free ex-governor of Herat

KABUL, Sep 31 (AFP) - Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood on Saturday asked the Taliban to release a former governor of western Herat province to allow a prisoner swap deal to go ahead.

A spokesman for Masood said that if the Taliban wanted the exchange to go ahead they should free Ismael Khan, a prominent opposition commander and former governor of Herat.

"We want Ismael Khan to be part of this process. We may not swap more than 300 prisoners if they do not agree to free Ismael Khan," spokesman Mohammed Aref said by satellite phone from the northern Panjsher valley.

He said Masood, an ally of ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani, wanted the exchange to cover all prisoners held by the two sides.

Ismael Khan has spent two years in Taliban captivity. He was captured in northern Faryab in May 1997.

The most senior Taliban official held by Masood is Mulla Mujahid, a former acting defence minister in the Taliban administration, Aref said.

"We want them (Taliban) to release all our men and we will free Mulla Mujahid and all other Taliban in our custody," he said.

He said that an expected swap did

not take place Thursday as the 50 prisoners the Taliban offered to release were not "our men."

"They were not our fighters. They were ordinary people whom the Taliban had arrested from the streets," Aref said.

The Taliban has accused Masood of using similar tactics and the mutual mistrust has led to snags in the swap process.

Masood's side has submitted to the Taliban a list of 650 militia prisoners and asked the Taliban provide a list of the same number of their detained soldiers in order to resolve the problem, Aref said. Apart from the listed 650, there might be another 700 Taliban fighters in the custody of Masood's forces, Aref estimated.

A Taliban official Thursday said that both sides had agreed to swap 1,000 prisoners each in batches of 150 every day.

Masood is seen as the last obstacle to Taliban ambitions to gain control of the whole country. The Islamic militia now holds more than 80 per cent of Afghan territory.

The Taliban suffered losses in a series of offensives against Masood in northeastern Afghanistan this month.

Masood asks Taliban to release Ismael Khan

KABUL, Oct 31: Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood on Saturday asked the Taliban to release a former governor of western Herat province to allow a prisoner swap deal to go ahead.

A spokesman for Masood said that if the Taliban wanted the exchange to go ahead they should free Ismael Khan, a prominent opposition commander and former governor of Herat.

"We want Ismael Khan to be part of this process. We may not swap more than 300 prisoners if they do not agree to free Ismael Khan," spokesman Mohammed Aref said

by satellite phone from the northern Panjsher valley.

He said Masood wanted the exchange to cover all prisoners held by the two sides.

Ismael Khan has spent over a year in Taliban captivity. He was captured in northern Faryab in May last year. The most senior Taliban official held by Masood is Mulla Mujahid, a former acting defence minister in the Taliban administration, Aref said.

"We want them (Taliban) to release all our men and we will free Mulla Mujahid and all other Taliban in our custody," he said.—AFP

Ahmed Shah Masood makes flying visit to Iran

TEHRAN (NNI) - Commander of the Afghan government Ahmad Shah Masood made a flying visit to Iran, reports Xinhua on Sunday.

Masood arrived here Friday night and left on Saturday after meeting several Iranian officials, including Iran's special envoy on Afghan affairs Mohammad Ali Taherian, the report said.

No details were available about Masood's talks with Iranian officials, the daily said, but quoting an informed source as saying that "the talks were important given the current development in Afghanistan."

Masood came to Tehran just one day before Iran was to launch military maneuvers, the biggest since Islamic revolution in 1979, along the Afghan borders. About 200,000 military personnel are taking part in the military exercises, apparently flexing muscles to the hostile Afghan Taliban regime.

Observers here believe that Masood's visit to Iran may also be related to swaps of prisoners of wars (POW) between his forces and the rival Taliban militia, which have occupied 90 percent of the country's territory.

The Afghan commander under the ousted government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani has demanded to swap all POWs with the Taliban, including senior officials from both sides.

Masood's side has submitted the Taliban a list of 650 POWs and asked the Taliban to provide a similar list.

A Pakistani diplomat residing in Iran told Xinhua correspondent that several hundreds of Taliban POWs are being jailed in Mashhad, the capital of Iran's northeastern province Khorasan.

The Taliban has demanded that Iran release their POWs after 51 Iranian hostages were set free during the past months with mediation of the U.N. Secretary General's special envoy on Afghan affairs.

However, the ambassador of Rabbani's government to Tehran denied such a claim, saying that the Afghan government does not need to keep the Taliban POWs in Iran.

NATION

02 NOV 1993

DAWN

01 NOV 1993

Taliban declare Osama innocent

By Ismail Khan

PESHAWAR: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban on Friday declared Osama bin Laden — the alleged mastermind of terrorist activities against the USA — as 'free of sin' and 'innocent' after the expiry of three week long inquiry by the Supreme Court Chief Justice, Mullah Noor Muhammad Saqib.

The chief justice was quoted by a Taliban official as saying that no individual or state had presented any evidence against bin Laden during his three-week of investigations into alleged terrorist activities against foreign countries from Afghanistan's soil. "The case against bin Laden is closed and over. Without any evidence, he is a man without a sin. He is a free man", the Taliban official quoted him as saying.

Saqib who flew from Kabul to Kandahar after announcing the verdict said he had waited for too long but the Americans which had indicted Laden had failed to produce any evidence against him. The illusive Saudi millionaire, who has been

keeping low, since the US cruise missiles hit his suspected terrorist camps in Khost on August 21, is widely believed to be living in Kandahar under high security. The Taliban claim he has been asked to refrain from indulging in any political or military activity from Afghanistan or issuing fatwas and statements. His May 16th, fatwa declaring a holy war against America and Israel for occupying the holy lands had irked the Taliban.

The Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, had appointed Saqib the head of a commission on October 25 to collect evidence against Laden and deliver his verdict in accordance with the Shariah. The commission which was directed to give its verdict in two weeks was later given another week. The deadline expired on Friday.

The BBC, meanwhile, quoted Taliban's foreign minister, Mullah Muhammad Hassan, as saying that the deadline for presenting evidence

Continued on Page

Osama innocent, will remain our guest : Taliban

KABUL (AFP) - The Taliban authorities said Friday that Osama bin Laden was innocent of all terrorist charges and that the dissident Saudi billionaire would remain a welcome guest in Afghanistan.

Taliban spokesman Abdul Hai Mutmaen said the militia's Supreme Court had cleared bin Laden of US allegations that he was responsible for the August 7 bombings of two US embassies in east Africa, killing 224 people. "Since we had set a deadline for evidence to be advanced to prove Osama's involvement in the Kenya and Tanzania bombings, and since nobody was able to set forth any evidence... he has been cleared," he told AFP. "He can live in Afghanistan as a Muslim guest but the ban on his political and military activities is still in force," Mutmaen said.

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Taliban declare Osama innocent

Continued from Page 1

against Laden had expired and that nobody would now have the right to ask for him. "No country or individual has come forward with evidence and nobody will have the right to ask for him now", he was quoted as saying.

The US accuse the dissident Saudi of being behind the bombing incidents in Kenya and Tanzania in August last which killed more than 250 people. It also believes that Laden was involved in the two bombings against American military installations in 1995 and 1996 which killed 29 people. Saudi interior minister, however, denied last month that Osama bin Laden was not involved in

the two explosions

Saudi Arabia suspended its diplomatic relations with the Taliban after the Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki al Faisal received a rude 'no' from Mullah Omar to Riyadh's request for Laden's expulsion from Afghanistan.

Taliban's minister for culture and information, Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi, said in Kabul that they had fulfilled their responsibility by appointing the commission inviting evidence against Laden. He said that the Saudi dissident had been asked to refrain from using Afghanistan's soil for political or military activities against any foreign countries. "And he has agreed", he said of Laden.

NATION 21 NOV 1999

Probe into murder of UN official: Taliban

KABUL (AFP) - A senior Taliban official Sunday said the militia was investigating two Pakistanis allegedly involved in the murder of a UN military official in Kabul.

Qari Deen Mohammad, the Taliban's planning minister, told reporters the 'Pakistani nationals had not yet confessed involvement in the August 21 killing.

'It is hard to predict when the investigations can produce a concrete result,' the minister said.

However he said the probe so far showed the two Pakistanis arrested by the Taliban in Kabul were unlikely to be the main culprits. Colonel Carmile Calo of Italy was killed in Kabul on August 21, hours after a US cruise missile attack on suspected terrorist camps in eastern Afghanistan.

In protest against Calo's killing the UN pulled all its 51 international staff from Afghanistan.

The planning minister last month signed a security agreement with the UN which commits the Taliban to providing 'satisfactory reports' to the UN on the probe into the murder of Calo and two other local staff, Mohammad Nasir Habibi and Mohammad Hashem Basharyar, killed earlier this year.

Kandahar more powerful symbol of Taliban unity

KANDAHAR (AFP) - Battle-scarred Kabul may be the national capital but for Afghanistan's Taliban

militia, their base of Kandahar is a more powerful symbol of their unity and power.

'Kandahar has great importance for us. Here lives our Amir (ruler) and it is the staging post for the victories of Islam,' says Taliban fighter Enyyat Ullah. He describes the southern city as a 'symbol of Pashtun unity and a fountainhead of Islamic rule in Afghanistan.'

Similar sentiments are expressed by other members of the Islamic militia, a force made up of religious students from the majority Pashtun community that emerged from Koranic schools here in November 1994.

The Taliban now control 90 per cent of Afghanistan, applying an ultra-strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia law that is credited by some for restoring law and order but is equally condemned by others for its restrictions on everyday life, notably against women.

A retreating resistance force comprising other ethnic groups continues to hold out against Taliban rule in the north of the country.

Reclusive Taliban chief Mullah Mohammad Omar, who comes from the nearby village of Sanghisar, has made Kandahar his permanent seat.

He lives in a castle which was once home to 17th-century ruler Ahmed Shah Abdali who united the Pashtuns, and only ventures out for Islamic festivals.

Taliban question Pakistanis in UN official's killing

KABUL, Nov 1 (NNI): Taliban are interrogating two Pakistanis into the killing over the killing of a UN official in Kabul in August which led to the withdrawal of all UN aid workers from the Afghan capital, a militia minister said on Sunday.

Taliban's Minister for Planning Qari Deen Mohammad, told reporters that an investigation is under way and it is difficult to say the probe might produce substantial results because the two Pakistani nationals denied charges of the shooting.

An Italian U.N. Colonel, Carmine Calo, was killed and a French colleague was injured in an attack in Kabul on August 21 after U.S. cruise missile attacks on Saudi national Osama Bin Laden. Deen Mohammad said the investigation was 20 percent complete and would be conducted under the Islamic Sharia law. "If proven that Pakistanis are guilty, the victim's family can sue them in the court," the minister said.

The investigation was moving slowly partly because the Taliban investigating the case had no previous experience, he said.

The UN pulled its foreign nationals out of Afghanistan where it had one of its biggest operations and only negotiated a limited return after securing security guarantees in talks with senior Taliban officials in Islamabad last month. The two sides struck a deal that bound Taliban to provide security to UN staff.

The two Pakistanis have been under Taliban detention in its southern stronghold of Kandahar since the shooting.

Under the Islamabad Taliban-UN security agreement, the militia is supposed to provide satisfactory report to the UN on investigations into the murders of three UN staff members and to provide formal explanations as to why two UN staffers are being held in detention in Kabul.

Two other UN staffers were found dead in the eastern Afghan town of Jalalabad in July this year.

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THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

06 NOV 1998

Taliban allow 10 foreign NGOs to resume work in Kabul

KABUL: Afghanistan's Taliban authorities have allowed 10 western aid groups to resume operations in Kabul after they gave in to earlier Taliban demands, officials said Wednesday.

Raz Mohammad, in-charge of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) section in the planning ministry, told reporters the aid groups had agreed to shift their location to the Polytechnic compound, chosen by the Taliban authorities.

Around 20 NGOs were expelled from Kabul in July after they refused a demand by the Islamic militia that they give up their offices and residences and move to the isolated and dilapidated polytechnic.

"In their letters, they have agreed that they would go to the polytechnic building, Raz Mohammad said.

The aid groups who are already in Kabul can use their previous offices, but they also have to sign separate contracts with the polytechnic authorities to work out details including rent and duration of their stay, he said.

The NGOs granted resumption permits include the German Agro-Action, the International Assistance Mission, the Action Contra le Faim, the Dutch Committee for Afghanistan, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, a Danish aid group DACAR, the German Peace Village and the Swiss Terre des Hommes.

The Taliban official also explained German Agro-Action would soon start repairing one block in the bombed-out compound to be allotted to other NGOs.

They said concern was growing among the aid groups they would face acute shortages of funds following a total aid ban by the EC which had been a key donor of assistance to the humanitarian operations in Afghanistan.—AFP

Taliban jailed for defacing Buddha

KABUL: Armed Taliban soldiers have been deployed to protect Afghanistan's ancient statues of Buddha and a "miscreant" Taliban soldier who fired at the archeological treasures has been jailed, Mohammed Naeem Sufi, director of planning and foreign relations said Wednesday.

"We are trying to preserve our historical monuments," he told the Associated Press in an interview in the beleaguered capital. "It is not the policy of the Taliban to destroy our cultural heritage."

Sufi's comments followed reports that a 35-metre (105-foot) Buddha was damaged during a battle in September between the Taliban army and their Shiite Muslim enemies for control of Bamyan province, home to two giant buddha statues. A Taliban soldier, who wouldn't give his name, said that a Taliban fired a tank shell at the Buddha, but "it's ok."

While Sufi said the renegade soldier fired a handgun at the statue, several separate witnesses, who fled the fighting, said the damage to the statue was a gaping hole in the face and in the groin area. "When the Taliban captured Bamyan, one of the miscreants fired his pistol at the statues," said Sufi. "When the higher authorities learned about it he was arrested and now we have deployed guards to save the statues."

Two years ago front line Taliban commanders threatened to destroy the statues, including a 55 metre Buddha — the world's tallest standing Buddha.—AP

12 bodies found in Kabul

ISLAMABAD, Nov 14: The Taliban said on Saturday they had discovered 12 bodies of people allegedly executed by the Hizb-i-Wahdat, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The AIP said the bodies had been dumped in the building of the ministry of higher education in the Kart-i-Chaar district of Kabul.

Hizb-i-Wahdat controlled the area until the militia swept into Kabul and also drove out forces loyal to former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani more than two years ago, AIP quoted Maulvi Anwarul Haq Mujahid of the ministry as saying.

"What appears from bones of the bodies is that they were burnt," Mujahid said.—dpa

DAWN

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Afghan troubadour now sings for Taliban

By Suzanne Goldenberg

KANDAHAR: Once he sang of love and moonlit nights, in a voice so tender that audiences lolling on the customary bolsters would sweep their arms towards the stage and bend their heads in appreciation.

That was in the days of music. Nowadays, instruments are banned in Kandahar, as in most of Afghanistan, because the Taliban believe a mind drawn to beauty can easily wander into sin.

And so while musicians fled or fell silent, one of Afghanistan's most popular practitioners of the *ghazal* became a songbird of the Taliban.

Two years on, Naimatullah Kandahari — as is the custom for poets and singers, he has added the city of his birth to his name — has recorded more than a dozen cassettes of the Pashtu-language martial tunes that are practically the only form of music sanctioned by the Taliban. There are no concerts.

Album number 14 was released last month. It joins a galaxy of Taliban offerings on display in a tiny shop in Kandahar, the southern city that is the stronghold of the militia. All the cassettes were recorded locally, in the rather primitive conditions of the shop-owner's home studio.

None of the albums has a title, and buyers make their selection according to the singer. But it's easy to guess the content from cover designs whose central motif is invariably a photograph of some kind of armament: tanks, grenades, Kalashnikovs, jet fighters or anti-aircraft guns.

Among the killing machines, Naimatullah's sad eyes, the colour of bourbon, stare out from the racks. His is the only face to survive the Taliban ban against depictions of the human form.

Now aged 35, Naimatullah began singing at the age of eight, and performing on the radio and at con-

certs in India and Pakistan while still in his teens. His six regular accompanists now live in Pakistan. He visits them, not least because his albums give a measure of security to one whose very occupation is suspect for the Taliban but do not bring in enough to survive.

So, during the cool winter months of the wedding season, Naimatullah spends two or three days a week in Pakistan, performing at weddings in Karachi, and Quetta, a city only six hours' drive from Kandahar.

The Taliban know about his double life, Naimatullah says, but they accept it because they know he cannot make do on his official earnings.

He makes a flat fee of just Rs 2,000 per recording.

Naimatullah is grateful to have been allowed to stay in his home. His two children have died, but if he were to have a son, he would want him to be a singer too. — Dawn/The Guardian News Service.

Afghanistan pull out

KABUL: Dwindling finances and changing sports policies have forced Afghanistan to withdraw from the Asian Games to be held in Bangkok in December, officials from the ruling Taliban militia said Tuesday.

Sports Minister Abdul Shokour Mutmaen told AFP the Taliban administration could not meet the expenses for its athletes to participate in the December 6-20 games, though it was able to pay for their plane tickets.

"In view of the economic problems, Afghanistan cannot send its sportsmen to the Asian Games, for the first time in history of the competition," added Mutmaen.

He also accused Thailand of not being a good host for its refusal to pay for accommodation and food of the athletes.

"Traditionally, the hosts used to open up a village where the athletes could eat and stay free," said the minister, alleging Thailand was the first nation to break this tradition.

The religious militia had intended to send 40 athletes to the games to compete in boxing, wrestling, karate, judo, taekwondo, athletics and cycling. "Our sportsmen are terribly disturbed for not being able to compete," Mutmaen said, also accusing the game authorities of discriminating against the Taliban. — AFP

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Shia leader Ustad Akbari reaches Kabul

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Top Afghan Shia leader Ustad Mohammad Akbari for the first time reached Kabul Sunday after surrendering to the Taliban.

A Taliban leader, Syed Mohammad Haqqani, said in Kabul that Akbari arrived with a 36-member delegation and was put up at the government-run Intercontinental Hotel. He said Mulla Mohammad Kabir, an aide to acting Afghan president Mulla Mohammad Rabbani, held a meeting with Akbari and his colleagues and welcomed him in Kabul.

Akbari had surrendered to Taliban in Wars district of Bamiyan province in central Afghanistan recently. This was seen as a major political and military gain for the Taliban because Akbari headed the breakaway faction of the Shia-based party, Hezb-i-Wahdat. The mainstream Hezb-i-Wahdat, which is pro-

Iran, is led by Karim Khalili.

According to the Peshawar-based Sahaar News Agency, the Taliban were planning to put up Akbari in the posh Wazir Akbar Khan locality in Kabul not only to accord him respect but also to keep a watch on his movement. It said among Akbari's 36 supporters accompanying him to Kabul were known persons like Ustad Ansari, Haji Lali, Ustad Shuja'ai, Haji Tahqeeqi, Ustad Ahmadi and Mohaqqiq. However, it added that this Mohaqqiq was not the one who is deputy head of Karim Khalili's Hezb-i-Wahdat and is presently based in Iran.

It may be mentioned that Akbari broke away from Khalili in 1994 and formed his own faction of Hezb-i-Wahdat. He later joined Prof Burhanuddin Rabbani's government in Kabul. His forces were often involved in clashes with Khalili's troops for control of Bamiyan province.

Another rocket hits Kabul airport

KABUL: A rocket slammed into the beleaguered capital at noon on Wednesday, but there were no immediate reports of casualties. The rocket, which hit near the combined military and civilian airport, was fired from positions north of the capital where soldiers loyal to opposition leader Ahmad Shah Masud are positioned.

The battlefield, barely 20 kilometres north of the city, has been relatively quiet in recent weeks while much of the fighting has been restricted to the northern provinces of Kunduz and Takhar. There the opposition soldiers are trying to push their Taliban rivals out of areas they

have captured in recent months.

Afghanistan's Taliban army, which rules 90 per cent of the country, is trying to gain full control, while the northern-based alliance is fighting to preserve the 10 per cent of the area they control.

Opposition soldiers said Taliban jet fighters have been pounded their area killing civilians, a charge the religious militia has denied. However, in recent weeks the opposition has been firing rockets at the airport in an apparent attempt to stop the aircraft from taking off. But so far there has been little damage to the airport as a result of the rockets, said a Taliban official.—AP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

19 NOV 1998

Has Taliban government president been dethroned?

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - The unexplained absence of Afghan President Mullah Mohammad Rabbani from Kabul is giving rise to all kinds of speculations.

Rumours are making the rounds in the war-battered Kabul city that Mullah Rabbani, president of the Taliban's interim authority and second-in-command to Mullah Mohammad Omer, has either been arrested five days back, or has fled Afghanistan.

The Taliban officials have, however, confirmed his presence in Kandahar, and said Rabbani was there on account of "ill-health".

According to reports confirmed by sources, Maulvi Abdul Kabir, the governor of Ningarhar and a deputy to Mulla Rabbani in Kabul, has taken over control of the government.

The Taliban officials in Kandahar dispelled the impression, however, that Mulla Rabbani had been dethroned, saying the president will take over his duties as soon as his health improves.

Due to unresolved internal differences among the hardline student militia's leadership, Mullah Rabbani was being sidelined.

His recent absence from Kabul comes on the heels of country-wide arrests of elements stated to be involved in a conspiracy to stage a coup against the Taliban.

When contacted by *The Frontier Post*, Abdul Ahad Jehangirwal, a Taliban spokesman in Kandahar, contradicted the reports of Rabbani's arrest.

Jehangirwal added that due to his illness, Mullah Rabbani is currently in Kandahar and as soon as he recovered, he will assume his duties in Kabul.

On some important occasions recently, such as the Taliban's face-to-face talks with the opposition in Islamabad, and during their negotiations with Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN special envoy for Afghanistan, Mulla Rabbani remained absent from the scene.

On the other hand, said a source, Maulvi Abdul Kabir was being entrusted with more and more powers by Mullah Omar.

Although the differences among the Taliban leadership existed since long, but these came to surface with great strength during US special envoy Bill Richardson's visit to Kabul.

During a meeting with Richardson, Mullah Rabbani had agreed to ceasefire.

The agreement was announced by Richardson in Islamabad, but within hours of his disclosure some Taliban spokesmen loyal to the movement founder Mullah Omar, disowned the agreement on Omer's behalf.

More recently, the disrespectful disarming of the Taliban commander Dadullah and his companions in Kabul is another incident indicating internal differences. Dadullah and his companions were arrested for plotting a coup against the Taliban and conspiring to create law and order problem in the country.

Also, some prominent Taliban leaders, who were at the helm of affairs until recently and held important positions, have been sidelined and sent into isolation.

Kabul airport hit by rockets

KABUL: Opposition forces Saturday staged a series of rocket strikes on Kabul airport and claimed the capture of a strategic border district from the Taliban militia in Kunduz province in far north Afghanistan.

Residents of the Afghan capital shut their businesses and ran for cover as more than 20 rockets shook the city Saturday wounding at least five people, witnesses said.

It was the fiercest attack on Kabul in recent months by the opposition forces loyal to former military chief Ahmed Shah Masud. His soldiers are positioned about 20 kilometers outside the city.

Most rockets hit the combined military and civilian airport from where jet fighters of the Taliban militia took off throughout the day. The airport was sealed-off shortly after the assault, making it impossible to know the damage.

Some rockets landed in civilian neighborhoods wounding at least

five people and forcing the close of several markets, witnesses said.

One man said he was on his way to the hospital to donate blood for his wife, who was to have surgery when the rocket landed and he was wounded.

Defense minister in the ousted government of President Rabbani, Masud is the last opposition leader resisting. Most other opposition groups have been routed by the Taliban in recent months.

Opposition forces claimed they captured two strategic districts in northern Kunduz province on the frontier with the Central Asian state of Tajikistan.

"Our forces have now launched an attack from three sides on Kunduz city," said opposition spokesman who identified himself as Abdullah.

There was no independent confirmation of the opposition claim or any comment from the Taliban militia.

According to opposition reports Masud has now made substantial gains across the Afghan side of the far north border with Tajikistan stretching from his supply base in Taloqan.

One analyst said Sher Khan Bander is highly important given its first class port facilities along the Amu River, and access bridge to Tajikistan from where Masud can bolster supplies.

Independent confirmation was not immediately available while a Taliban spokesman said he was unable to comment on the reports.

Abdullah said the Taliban had also launched at least 12 aerial bombardments at Charikar, 64 kilometres north of Kabul and on Masud-held villages to the north of Kabul. But there were no immediate reports of casualties, he added. However, fighting in Fariyab province, which had been extensive late this week, had eased, Abdullah said.—AP/AFP

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Afghan Support Group moot Taliban demand representation

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Taliban have demanded their representation in the forthcoming meeting of the Afghan Support Group (ASG) to be held in Tokyo on December 7-8.

"Taliban control more than 90 per cent of the area, including capital Kabul, and have the right to apprise the world community of the miseries of Afghan nation," Taliban charge d'affaires in Islamabad Maulvi Saeedur Rahman Haqqani said.

The Afghan support group will review the current political, security situation and humanitarian assistance programmes in Afghanistan, UN officials said Sunday. About 100 representatives from international organisations, NGOs and donor countries are expected to attend the ASG group meeting.

Maulvi Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil, advisor to Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar, in his meeting with the UN

officials in Islamabad Friday called for Taliban representation in the ASG meeting in the Japanese capital.

The group's meeting will also discuss the ongoing humanitarian assistance and condition for the return of UN international staff to Afghanistan, needs and prospects for humanitarian assistance after the return of the international staff, natural disasters and anti-personnel mines, human rights, gender issues and drug trafficking.

Status of "Afghanistan 1999 Appeal" will also be discussed in the meeting, preparation for the document is in final stages.

The United Nations agencies are currently reviewing their project submissions and highlighting priority activities. Advance copies will be shared with ASG participants before the Tokyo meeting. The appeal will be formally launched in Geneva on 16-17 December.

Taliban deny differences between Rabbani, Omar

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The Taliban have refuted reports that their acting president Mulla Mohammad Rabbani had been sidelined after developing serious differences with supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar.

Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi, Afghanistan's information and culture minister and a senior Taliban leader, told the Peshawar-based Sahara News Agency in an interview that Mulla Rabbani had neither been removed from his office nor put under house arrest. He said Mulla Rabbani had gone to his na-

tive Kandahar to fulfil certain personal obligations and would be back in Kabul soon. He reminded that similar propaganda was made in the past also about Mulla Rabbani's differences with Mulla Omar.

Muttaqi also disputed the contention of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance that Saudi Arabia and Western countries had been enemies of 18 million Afghans by the Taliban for the sake of an individual, i.e. Osama Bin Laden.

He said Bin Laden was given refuge in Afghanistan by the mujahideen government prior to the Taliban.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

27 NOV 1999

Taliban to accommodate three Shia leaders in govt

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: In a significant move to make their government in Afghanistan broad-based, the Taliban Islamic Movement founder Mulla Mohammad Omar announced Sunday that the three Shia leaders who recently declared support for the Taliban would be given official responsibilities.

Mulla Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, an aide to Mulla Omar, said in Kandahar that Hezb-i-Wahdat head Ustad Mohammad Akbari, an important Shia military commander Khodadad Irfani and former Junbush-i-Milli Islami leader Nasim Mehdi would be accommodated in the Taliban-led Afghan government.

However, he made it clear that

the three and other opposition figures swearing allegiance to the Taliban would be accommodated as individuals and not as representatives of a political group.

"We want to use their experience and knowledge to rebuild Afghanistan as we need men who can deliver," explained Mutawakil.

It may be added that there is presently no ranking Shia in the Taliban administration. The Taliban captured the Shia heartland of Bamiyan in central Afghanistan in September and forced the mainstream Hezb-i-Wahdat leader Karim Khalili to flee to Iran.

Earlier in August, they had captured Mazar-i-Sharif, which was largely controlled by Hezb-i-Wahdat and a smaller Shia party, Harkat-i-Islami of Shaikh Asef Mohseni.

Akbari, who broke away from Khalili in 1994 and formed his own faction of Hezb-i-Wahdat, surrendered to the Taliban recently and travelled to Kabul to declare support to the Taliban.

Next Nasim Mehdi, who in the past was a close aide to defeated Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Rasheed Dostum, announced that he was in the Taliban headquarters of Kandahar and was now loyal to the Taliban government. Yesterday, Irfani broke his silence in Ghazni and declared that he had unconditionally joined hands with the Taliban.

These public pronouncements of support for the Taliban by prominent opposition figures is quite an achievement for the Taliban, especially as it has come at a time when they are facing renewed military pressure on their position in Northern Afghanistan by Ahmad Shah Masud and other opposition commanders.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

30 NOV 1993

Iran gives illegal Afghan refugees three weeks to leave

TEHRAN, Oct 31: Iran said on Saturday it had given hundreds of thousands of illegal Afghan refugees three weeks to leave the country.

Interior ministry official Hassan-Ali Ebrahimi said the Afghans must report to the ministry by Nov 21 and the government would then issue exit permits in Mashhad, in Khorasan province which borders Afghanistan.

Returning refugees will each be given 40 dollars, a blanket and 50 kilos of wheat for their journey home and as an incentive to return.

Iran has sheltered around two million Afghan refugees.

Hundreds of thousands of Afghans are believed to have entered and live in Iran illegally. They are scattered across the country, many working menial and low-paid jobs in big cities, particularly Tehran.

After the collapse of the communist regime in Kabul in 1992, Iranian authorities, battling chronic unemployment, tried to repatriate over one million Afghans.

Iran recently sealed its border with Afghanistan in an effort to curb the flow of more refugees and in recent weeks, police have rounded up Afghans without valid residency papers in Tehran and Mashhad.—AFP

Afghan refugees being forced to leave Iran: report

ISLAMABAD: After the stand-off with Afghanistan, Iran has started pushing the Iran-based Afghan refugees into Afghanistan and hundreds of them have returned to their homes.

Quoting Iranian interior minister, the BBC said that hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees were being provided three weeks time to return to their country.

Six hundred and fifty Afghan refugees families have returned to Afghanistan within few weeks, said the radio. Afghan refugees told UNHCR that they were returning to their country because they were not feeling economically and physically secure in Iran.

They further said that they were facing increasing hatred from the local people and pressure from the Iranian government, that is why they were compelled to return to their country. The number of Afghan refugees who had been forced to go to their country reached up to 8,000 at the start of this year. —APP

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DAWN

01 NOV 1998

Kabul protests refugees' expulsion

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Mulla Saeedur Rahman Haqqani, Afghanistan's ambassador in Pakistan, has said his government had lodged formal complaints with the United Nations against the harassment of Afghan refugees in Iran.

He told The News Wednesday that letters were delivered in Islamabad to the UNHCR and UNSMA offices to complain that Iran's decision to expel

Afghan refugees was in violation of the rights of refugees. "Even today, we received information that scores of Afghan refugees were arrested in Shiraz, Isfahan and other Iranian cities. A prison near Saranan is overflowing with the refugees," he alleged.

Haqqani argued that 150,000 Afghan refugees are being expelled on the eve of the harsh Afghan winter when almost all returnees have no shelter and nowhere to go.

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Afghans to discuss winding up of business with Nawaz

By our correspondent

HARIPUR: A delegation of Afghan refugees would call on Nawaz Sharif on Monday to discuss with him local administration's decision to wind up their business in Haripur.

This was disclosed by one of the delegates while talking to the newsmen here on Sunday evening. The team would be led by Afghan ambassador in Islamabad Maulvi Saeed-ur-Rehman Haqani.

A few days ago the local administration ordered all the Afghan traders in Haripur to wind up their business within a couple of days and remain in their camps. This decision caused ripples among the refugees

dealing in crockery, clothes, electronics, 'landa', fruit and vegetable business who contacted the commissionerate of refugees in Peshawar and Afghan ambassador in Islamabad.

According to one of the refugees who is also going to meet the Prime Minister for apprising him of the factual position and grievances on the part of refugees neither the provincial government nor the federal government issued such directives and in the absence of any such order from higher authorities this move of local administration looked surprising and purely on the instigation of vested interests, he claimed. "Because we are selling everything and

offering cheaper rates than the other businessmen, we are being punished on the instigation of some business tycoons," claimed one of the shopkeepers.

When the attention of refugee, who did not want to be named, was drawn towards the escalating rates of crimes being committed by the Afghan refugees, he conceded that there were some people involved in criminal activities but questioned as to who was aiding these criminals. He also said that by restricting the refugees to their camps the administration would not achieve the desired results, and added, the unemployed refugees would indulge in more such activities for their survival.

Afghans asked to wind up business in Haripur

By our correspondent

HARIPUR: In a surprise move, local administration has asked the Afghan refugees to wind up their business in Haripur city and vacate as soon as possible.

Sources said the district administration received directives from the provincial government to put an immediate end to the business activities of Afghan refugees in Haripur. The directive asked refugees to remain restricted to the camps till further orders.

Eyewitnesses said a local magistrate on Wednesday visited shops run by the Afghans and asked them to vacate their shops immediately.

Meanwhile, local police on Wednesday filed a case against two persons for the reported sexual molestation of a poor teenage girl.

Sixteen-year-old girl alleged that she was picked up by two persons from Haripur and taken to Balochistan where she was kept for five months.

She was molested in their captivity, leading to her pregnancy.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

26 NOV 1998

Masood wins battles but not the war

YANGI QALA, Afghanistan (AFP) — The last military commander resisting the Taliban has recently won a series of battles but is as far as ever from winning the war against the hardline Islamic militia.

Ahmed Shah Masood's victories of recent weeks have halted the Taliban advance into northern Afghanistan but his resistance is unlikely to break their domination of more than 80 per cent of the country.

Since August the Taliban have smashed the forces of Uzbek general Abdul Rashid Dostam in the west and northwest, and those of the pro-Iranian Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat in central Bamiyan province.

But recent setbacks for the Taliban mean the situation has changed, says Masood, an ethnic Tajik and key ally of ousted president Burhanuddin Rabbani who emerged during the 1980s war against the occupying Soviets.

Masood is considered even by his enemies as a fine strategist. His forces have enjoyed a series of military successes in recent weeks and say they took 1,000 Taliban fighters out of action by killing or wounding them.

Masood's forces along with those of Rabbani are holed up in the north-east, having fought off the Taliban attempt to break into their stronghold and seize control of the whole of Afghanistan.

A standoff has now developed, with both sides expected to consolidate their positions during the impending harsh Afghan winter.

Underlining the intractability of the Afghan conflict, Masood said last week that talks were the only way forward but raised doubts the Taliban could be brought to the negotiating table.

There can be no military solution, Ahmed Shah Masood told AFP in an interview here. 'A political resolution must be found.'

Masood can rely on supplies from Tajikistan to the north, but any attempt to advance south into Taliban-held territory would stretch his resources and force him to seek help from other ethnic groups.

Last week saw him holding talks with ethnic-minority leaders, seeking to rebuild alliances undermined as the mainly-Pashun Taliban crushed resistance in their advance north.

Afghan opposition claims Taliban violating ceasefire

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's northern-based opposition accused their Taliban enemies Tuesday of violating a cease fire and attacking their positions north of the beleaguered capital.

However, they said it wouldn't effect an agreement between Afghanistan's two warring sides to continue with a prisoner exchange.

The Taliban launched an offensive in Dasht-i-Archi, a district in northern Kunduz province, some 250 kilometres (150 miles) north of Kabul and resorted to heavy artillery fire in the Ghorband area of central Parwan province, barely 60 kilometres (36 miles) from the capital, opposition spokesman, who identified himself only as Arif said.

There was no immediate comment from the Taliban militia. Opposition fighters repulsed the Taliban attack in Kunduz province, while in Parwan province they retaliated, he said.

The warring Afghan factions last month agreed to a cease fire and prisoner exchange negotiated by said Jalal, a close associate of Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah.

"In a country like Afghanistan, some violations of agreements are possible... but it won't hurt the process of exchange of prisoners," he said.

Representatives of the northern alliance will visit jails in the Taliban headquarters in southern Kandahar later Tuesday. There they will compile a list of their troops being held by the Taliban.

The two sides have agreed to exchange up to 3,000 prisoners. The Taliban militia, which controls almost 90 per cent of Afghanistan including the capital Kabul, is facing fierce resistance from Ahmed Shah Massoud's Jamiat-e-Islami in the remaining 10 per cent of the country.

The Taliban, or students of Islam are Sunni Muslims and mostly Pashuns — the majority ethnic group of Afghanistan. They follow a harsh version of Islam that bars women from work and education, forces men to wear beards and bans all light entertainment including music.

The opposition comprise mainly of religious and ethnic minorities including Shiites, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras. —AP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

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Another Afghan found dead mysteriously

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Mohammad Hasham Khan Paktyanee became a new victim who lost his life at the hands of unidentified culprits and no one is ready to take responsibility. No one from Pakistan or United Nations was willing to confess failure in this respect. The mysterious murders of the peace-loving and patriotic Afghans started when the personnel of secret agencies from Pakistan initiated stops for assembling of the jihadic leaders on one forum in early 80's. From the murder of ex-Afghan President Dr Najibullah and his younger brother Shahpur Ahmadzai, on the first day of Taliban's entry into Kabul, the process is still on.

From September 1996 till November 2, 1998 last a large number of Afghan elders including those who have contributed in what it called the he-

roic Islamic jihad have been gunned down.

Although Hasham Khan Paktyanee was the first cousin of late Afghan President Dr Najibullah, he never took part in political activities. He remained one among the active Afghan journalists and besides serving a number of newspapers and magazines, he remained as Raees (chief) of Kabul Television, Kabul Radio and even reached the most attractive office Director General of Afghanistan Information and Cultural Department.

No one was aware about presence of Mohammad Hasham Khan in Peshawar from April 1992 till September 1996 but when ex-Afghan President and founder of the National Reconciliation Policy Dr Najibullah and his younger brother Shahpur Ahmadzai were brutally murdered by still unknown culprits, he was emerged as a popular person.

Hundreds of fresh Afghan refugees arrive in Chitral

By our correspondent

CHITRAL: Hundreds of new Afghan refugees have arrived in Chitral and many of them have been leaving down-country due to harsh economic realities in northern Afghanistan.

The arrival of the refugees gained momentum during the last week of October as there was shortage of essential commodities after the Taliban's capture of different strategic towns. The ensuing winter is also a major contributor.

A group of six refugees from Kunduz told this correspondent that people of many areas were facing starvation and many of them would die if immediate relief was not made available to them.

Afghan camps hunting ground for human organs

By Ahmad Hassan

PESHAWAR, Nov 11: An American human rights organisation has claimed that extraction of human organs, mainly kidneys from refugee children, is rampant in the Afghan refugee camps in Peshawar. Moreover, it says, Afghan children of eight or nine years of age are subjected to sexual violence, are beaten up and forced into child labour. Girls of up to 10 years of age are bound in wedlock against heavy dowers, the organisation's report says.

The report alleges that not only the local police but also officials of Afghan refugees commissionerate are involved in these coercive and criminal acts.

It is learnt that a three-member delegation of the Washington-based 'Women Alliance for Peace and Human Rights' paid a visit to the NWFP a few months back. The UNHCR provided guidance and hospitality to the delegation which visited various Afghan refugee camps in and around Peshawar and obtained information about the state of affairs obtaining there. They used other sources of informations as well.

The organisation prepared a detailed report following this exercise in which horrific disclosures of sexual violence against and gross maltreatment of were made. Their report claims that the arrest and unlawful detention of Afghan children and elders is routine affair. The report has been sent to the provincial home department which has sought explanation from the concerned agencies, the sources said.

DAWN

12 NOV 1998

Afghan refugees facing police victimisation

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR – The jackal's evil fate drives him towards the city. This proverb fixes on Afghans who as a result of in-fighting in their motherland are compelled to take shelter and become ahead with Peshawar Police which is known for misuse of powers and harassing helpless and innocent people.

At least two incidents in the last few days, proves such immoral, inhuman and unethical attitude of the Peshawar police towards the helpless and war affected Afghan families in Peshawar. Even the Peshawar police is being patronised by some of the so-called newsmen who are involved in mis-reporting just for their own lust and vested interests.

The first incident registered in the jurisdiction of Faqirabad Police Station where a highly educated family was charged for what the police alleges involvement in inhuman and unethical acts. The police made the grounds for such allegations a report published in a national newspaper. However, no one from the newspaper concerned were aware that how such a report was published and who compiled it. In the light of such reports, a Head Constable along with his subordinates conducted a raid and he was unable to arrest the residents of the house when they introduced themselves. Later on the matter was filed when some high ranking police authorities were approached.

The second incident on Saturday last was registered in the boundary of Gul Bahar Police Station where an Afghan widow along with her two young daughters and a son were arrested on

the charges of prostitution from their rented home in Qadra Abad area and arrested the male accused from another locality Phando Road in Shah Dand area. The widow, 55 told the mediamen that she along with her daughters were on fastening and they were busy to prepare iftar when the policemen without any warrants arrested them. All of them were boarded in the police pick up and shifted to police station where they were photographed with other males who were already in police lock up.

Surprisingly, all male accused belong to a same locality Phando Road and all female belongs to the same house in Qadar Abad. But the custodians of law enforcing agencies have materialised their unknown purposes with showing their arrest from the same house which according to them is the den of prostitution.

It is not among the helpless Afghan families who are being facing such inhuman attitude of Peshawar police. This trend is in progress since a long against the Afghans and not only policemen but even those civil, intelligence and others have contributed a lot in harassment of Afghan families and subjected them to inhuman treatment.

Although SSP Malik Saad was unaware of the whole process and said, "I just came to know through newspaper reports." He ordered an inquiry into the issue. But all of the arrested people have been produced before Duty Magistrate Mr. Sharif Ahmad on Sunday where he ordered to release all of the accused on bail. It was yet to be confirmed that whether police claim was right or wrong but so far the magistrate proved it wrong and

responsibility rests with sincere police high ups to take notice wrong-doings of their subordinates who were utilising their official powers just for their vested interests.

Since long the Afghans respecting and commemorating the unprecedented hospitality extended to them by Pakistani people but they are unhappy of the police forces. A Denmark based Pushto-Darri newspaper in its each and every issue struggling to divert attentions of the UNO, OIC, Amnesty International and other international organisation to inhuman and unethical attitude of the NWFP police with the war displaced Afghans in all over the province. All such global organisations yet to take a notice of these brutal acts being committed against helpless and homeless Afghans.

No doubt to mention that there may be some criminal and anti-social elements in the 1.2 million Afghan population, settled in NWFP and adjoining tribal areas. But there is no justification for the police to victimise the decent and civilised Afghans. Even highly educated and respectable Afghans have time and again made such complaints against the police, intelligence and civil authorities.

While in fact, some of the policemen who are known for involvement in corruption and malpractices, patronising those Afghan nationals who are involved in criminal and other anti-social acts. A large number of affected Afghans have called upon the Prime Minister, Chief Minister and Inspector General of Police to take a notice of inhuman and immoral attitude of the policemen with them.

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Paintings by Afghan children appreciated

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: UNHCR officials on Friday said that awareness about education was increasing in the Afghan girls living in refugee camps as well as urban centres of Frontier province.

"I was moved by the presentation of the Afghan girl about her country and am pleased that she is in school," remarked Marie France Sevestre, the new head of UNHCR sub-office Peshawar. She was referring to the speech of an Afghan girl student, Zarifa of Bibi Maryam School Nasirbagh Refugee Camp while speaking at the painting exhibition of Afghan children.

UNHCR Community Services Officer, Wiliu Lillesaar while appreciating the work of the school students put on display said that these children were the future of Afghanistan who need to be encouraged to bring the best of themselves to open. "If we get funding, the community services wing can provide skill and education to the teenagers in the camps," said the officer. The encouraging factor, she said that the request for education was increasing in girl children.

About the paintings, she said that several NGOs and organisations have agreed to use some of the paintings as seasonal greeting cards on the forthcoming Christmas and Eid. She said though, NGOs and Afghan Refugees Commissionate was extending services in health and educa-

tion at the primary level to refugees living in camps, nothing was being offered to the urban refugees.

While Zarifa, who wrote poems in Pashto, Dari and English not only broke into tears herself during her emotional speech but moved almost the entire audience as well. "Every thing and every development taking place in Afghanistan make me cry. We want peace in the whole world, specially in Afghanistan," said Zarifa. She called upon the world community to take practical steps for restoration of peace and putting an end to the ongoing genocide in her homeland.

"We don't want food and other material assistance but need peace. We want education to help our country. Look that countries which won independence after Afghanistan are far developed than us," said the girl student. She said Afghanistan was historically and culturally richer than others and its people could rebuild their country provided peace and civil liberties were guaranteed to them. "The foreigners should not visit our schools and camps if they cannot help in restoration of peace. We are not animals to express sympathies with us. Such foreigners hurt our feelings when they say, oh, it is very bad. This is against our national pride," said Zarifa overtaken by emotions. A number of students from ILM, Bibi Maryam and International School of Peshawar deliver speeches.

Afghan commander injured, guard killed in Quetta attack

QUETTA: Some unknown assailants shot at and seriously injured a prominent commander of Hizb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar group) Sarkatib near Mastung, some 50 km off here on Wednesday. However, the guard of Sarkatib died in the attack.

He was the Mujahideen commander of Afghanistan's southern province of Kandhar until the Taliban captured the area. He had shifted to Pakistan and was residing in killi Ghousabad (district Mastung). He was taking his meal Tues-

day night at his home when the assailants knocked the door. As soon as his guard Mohammed Afzal came out the assailants opened fire with automatic weapons killing him on the spot.

Hearing the shots, Sarkatib followed his guard to enquire as to what was happening, the armed attackers also fired at him injuring him seriously and fled from the scene.

Sarkatib was shifted to Civil Hospital Quetta where his condition was stated to be out of danger.—APP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

26 NOV 1993

Sunday Times report.

Taliban militia massacred 8,000 people in Mazar

By Our Staff Correspondent

LONDON, Nov 1: The Times on Sunday published a detailed eye-witness accounts of, what it claimed, massacre of 8,000 people by the Taliban in Afghanistan when they captured the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif in August last.

Quoting the testimony, compiled by international observers and handed to Western diplomats in Pakistan, the newspaper said that hundreds of people were packed in containers where they were suffocated when the doors were locked in searing midday heat.

"Men, women and children were shot in their homes, on the streets, and hospital patients were murdered in their beds".

"Statements made available to The Sunday Times describe a campaign of slaughter directed against Shia Muslim minority, the Hazara," it said.

The newspaper said that the claims of witnesses have been supported by the influential American group, Human Rights Watch, which is due to reveal its own findings on the massacre on Sunday and will call on the United Nations to investigate what it describes as "one of the single worst examples of killings of civilians in Afghanistan's 20-year war."

"The detailed evidence of the Taliban atrocities will embarrass Western policy-makers who still see the fundamentalists as useful players in a modern game to keep Iranian and Russian influence out of Afghanistan and to ensure that the huge oil and gas riches of central Asia remain a prize for Western multinationals," the newspaper said.

Quoting unnamed witnesses, the newspaper said that the Taliban fighters swept through the city of

Mazar-i-Sharif firing heavy machine-guns mounted on pick-up trucks. One unnamed man described how the streets were covered with bodies and blood. He also claimed that the Taliban forbade anyone to bury these corpses for six days.

The paper has quoted "numerous unnamed witnesses", saying that on the second day of the capture, the Taliban began house-to-house search for Hazara men, who are easy to be recognised by their Mongols features.

Another unnamed witness, who gave testimony, said that the victims were shot in the head, the chest and the testicles. "Others had been slaughtered in what he (witness) called 'the halal way' — by having their throats slit," the paper said.

The paper quoted another unnamed witness as claiming that men not murdered on the spot were herded into containers after being badly beaten. "He (the unnamed witness) saw the doors opened on a container after all the men inside had died from suffocation".

The witness also testified that some containers were filled with children who were taken to an unknown destination after their parents had been killed.

"Human Rights Watch has obtained gruesome confirmation of the Taliban's penchant for death by container. It quotes a man who was detained by the militia and saw container trucks filled with victims leaving the Mazar-i-Sharif jail several times every day", the paper said. "Once he watched as the Taliban opened the container doors to find three prisoners alive and about 300 dead. The Taliban drove the trucks to a desert site known as Dasht-i-Leili and ordered porters to dump the cargo of corpses in the sands."

UN report says Taliban killed 8,000 in Mazar

Militia denies charge

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) - A UN report on Thursday gave grisly details of alleged Taliban massacres carried out in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif that may have left up to 8,000 people dead.

The report by UN special rapporteur for human rights on Afghanistan Choong-Hyun Pak provided the most detailed account so far of what is being called an August "killing frenzy" by the Islamic militia directed mainly against the Hazara Shiite minority.

The rapporteur based his report on reliable witness accounts. He did not visit the site of the killings because of the security situation.

He also confirmed that 10 Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist were killed on the first day of the Taliban capture of the opposition stronghold on August 8.

Their bodies, which have since been repatriated, remained in the Iranian consulate for two days before being buried in a mass grave at a girls' high school.

The Taliban allegedly targeted districts inhabited by the Hazara, who had fought against the Islamic militia in May 1997 during their earlier attempt to capture the city.

The report said that on August 8 and 9, "some of the persons who were killed were shot three times (twice in the head and once in the chest, or, once in the head, once in the chest and once in the groin), and then had their throats slit."

"All killings were seen as systematic, planned, and very well organized," the report said.

According to the report, approximately 3,000 Hazaras were summarily executed in their homes or in the street in the first six days after the Taliban takeover.

The estimated total number of killings so far ranges between 5,000 and 8,000, the report said.

The Taliban, in a response published with the report, denounced the findings as baseless.

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FRONTIER POST

06 NOV 1998

WFP protests to Kabul over loss of food

By Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, Nov 6: The United Nation World Food Programme (UNWFP) has protested to Afghan Charge d'Affaires in Pakistan Saidur Rehman Haqani over the disappearance of 1500 metric tons of food aid from WFP warehouses located in Bamiyan and Yakawalang provinces in central Afghanistan.

The WFP has also disclosed that three WFP pick up trucks and three other trucks parked in WFP's Bamiyan compound were also missing. A fourth truck was cannibalized for its parts.

The WFP also protested to envoy that its offices in Bamiyan and Yakawalang have been occupied by the Taliban forces.

The WFP Islamabad office said the losses were confirmed following the stock taking recently when fighting came to a halt in the area.

It said "the food, mostly wheat, with tons of high energy BP5 biscuits had been repositioned for an anticipated emergency situation in the region this winter."

Giving the brief background of the wheat stock, the press release said the WFP brought most of the wheat from Uzbekistan probing routes which were often blocked or hostile due to errant military commanders. "Some food was arranged by swaps with farmers in other areas. And some came on convoys from Kabul after months of negotiations with the Taliban for road clearance through front lines".

The WFP has demanded that Taliban authorities return the food stocks and other assets.

DAWN

07 NOV 1993

'No progress on Afghanistan till Pak, Iran cooperation'

UNITED NATIONS: No progress can be made in resolving the Afghan conflict until Afghanistan's neighbours, Iran and Pakistan, decide to cooperate, the UN special representative said Thursday.

"They have more influence than everybody else, and more responsibility than everybody else, and their cooperation is really needed," Lakhdar Brahimi, who has just returned from the region, told reporters.

Brahimi — the UN's special representative for Afghanistan — expressed pessimism about peace prospects in the "Six plus Two" framework.

He told the UN Security Council on Wednesday that the Six plus Two meetings had so far only attained limited and very disappointing results.

The group includes Afghanistan's neighbours China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (the "six"), as well as the United States and Russia.

Brahimi stressed Thursday that the Six plus Two formula could only work if all eight countries spoke with a single voice.—AFP

07 NOV 1993
THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

WFP protests Taliban seizure of food, trucks

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has sent the Taliban a "strong" protest over the disappearance of its food stocks and the takeover of WFP offices in central Afghanistan, the agency said Thursday.

A WFP statement here said 1,500 metric tons of food aid had disappeared from the agency's warehouses in Bamiyan and Yakawalang and its offices there had been "occupied" by Taliban authorities.

Six WFP trucks were also missing from the WFP compound in Bamiyan, the agency said.

The food, mostly wheat and biscuits, had been stored for an anticipated emergency in the region in the winter season, the statement said.

The losses were confirmed following the recent fighting in the area during which the Taliban military forces took control of Bamiyan and Yakawalang in the Hazarajat region, it said.

FRONTIER POST
06 NOV 1993

UN proposes human rights monitors for Afghanistan

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 5: UN special representative Lakhdar Brahimi on Wednesday appealed to the United Nations Security Council to back a proposal to deploy human rights monitors in Afghanistan.

Mr Brahimi told a closed-door council meeting that the UN wanted to deploy a group 20 of human rights monitors in Afghanistan as a preventive measure "to protect the living."

He appealed to council members for political support and also for financial backing for the proposed group.

US charge d'affaires Peter Burleigh, whose country holds the council presidency throughout November, told reporters after the meeting that council members "noted" the proposal.

Western diplomats said council members intended to consider the proposal.—AFP

DAWN

06 NOV 1993

5,000 massacred by Taliban in Mazar-e-Sharif: UN report

07 NOV 1993

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

UNITED NATIONS: A UN report alleges 4,000 to 5,000 people — many of them minorities, women and children — were killed after Afghanistan's Taliban warriors took over a northern city in August.

The report from the UN commission on human rights details mass killings of civilians in Mazar-e-Sharif, including executions, torture and mass suffocation of people crammed into metal containers left to simmer in the summer sun.

The Taliban rejected the report as "imaginary," and said its author — who didn't visit the country for security reasons and based his claims on "reliable sources" — hadn't verified any of the claims he had received.

The accusations "are simply a vast propaganda which only provokes baseless prejudices and brainwashes the people," the Taliban said in a reply contained in the report.

The city of Mazar-e-Sharif had been a stronghold of the northern alliance opposed to the Taliban, which has conquered roughly 90 per cent of the Central Asian nation and installed its strict brand of Islamic rule that forbids women from working outside the home.

The Taliban took over the city on Aug. 8, and the slayings of Iranian diplomats by Taliban soldiers during the capture prompted Tehran to beef up its military presence along the bor-

der and threaten military retaliation.

In the first week of the Taliban offensive, hundreds of people were summarily executed on the streets of the city or inside their homes, according to the report.

Still others were tortured to death: one survivor had his fingernails torn out. Others were repeatedly beaten with steel cables.

Many people suffocated after being crowded into metal containers and transported to another city for questioning, the report said.

"One witness saw the opening of three containers carrying 120 persons, of whom only three had survived the trip to Sheberghan," 80 miles (125 kilometres) west of Mazar-e-Sharif, the report said.

The United Nations has persistently criticised the Taliban's human rights record, but the details from the August massacres went far beyond the traditional UN complaints about the Taliban's restrictive treatment of women and girls.

The report's author, special rapporteur Choong Hyun Paik, said he was "horrified by the latest reports from Afghanistan, which are profoundly disturbing and indicate a worsening pattern of grave human rights violations."

The scale of violations warrants the urgent attention of the world community, he said in urging a more

thorough investigation of the slayings.

The UN envoy for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, asked the Security Council to approve sending human rights monitors for Afghanistan to ensure that other massacres are prevented.

The Taliban has agreed to an investigation of the massacres, but Brahimi told reporters Thursday that the United Nations is awaiting security guarantees.

The bulk of those slain in Mazar-e-Sharif — an estimated 3,000 people — belonged to the minority Hazara group. Surviving Hazaras, who are Shiite Muslims like most Iranians, were warned to practise the Sunni Muslim tradition of the Taliban if they wanted to survive, the report said.

The report also detailed massacres of about 1,800 people carried out during the Taliban takeover of central Bamiyan province and surrounding areas, which also contain large Hazara communities.

"The pattern of the killings observed showed that men, women and male children were shot, while baby girls were kicked or beaten to death," the report said.

Brahimi recently visited the region and eased tensions between Iran and Afghanistan by securing the release of 26 Iranians in detention since the takeover of Mazar-e-Sharif.—AP

WFP mission off to Afghanistan to assess food needs

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — A World Food Programme (WFP) team left for the security situation and food needs of thousands of people in the Taliban-held area, UN sources said.

The team left Kabul for the central Hazarajat region where 160,000 people will need food aid to survive the winter. Bamiyan, Yawkawlang and other major towns in the coming area were taken over by the militia in September.

The Taliban takeover ended a 18-month blockade by the militia which had cut off the population.

But despite the lifting of the Taliban blockade the WFP said "many people remain in critical situation, having sold assets over the previous year, as well as having produced two years of poor harvests. Several thousand more people placed by fighting in August may also be without food, it said in a statement.

2,000 tons to meet the needs of poor people. The statement said the WFP will determine "how and to whom the food should be distributed."

The visit follows reports of the disappearance of some 1,500 tons of wheat and two tons of biscuits from WFP food stocks meant for distribution in Bamiyan.

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WFP sends mission to Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR -- A team led by national staff of the United Nations World Food Programme left Kabul Friday bound for the Hazarajat and Bamyan in Central Afghanistan where they will assess the food supply and security situation in order to recommend possible emergency food requirements before winter prevents the movement of trucks.

In September, the Taliban military forces took control of Bamyan, Yawkawlang and other major towns of the Hazarajat region. This takeover ended the 18-month blockade which had cut off the Hazarajat population from their normal trading routes.

While lifting this blockade allowed movement to and from markets to resume, WFP believes that many people remain in critical situations having sold assets over the previous year, as well as having produced two years of poor harvests. Several thousand people displaced by the fighting in August may also be without sources of food. Two thousand tons of

food has been allocated to meet the needs of these IDPs.

WFP had planned a second mission for October, tasked with assessing the food supply and economic situation following the Taliban takeover. The Taliban issued road clearance and approvals for the mission this week.

Sherpao to be chief guest

The students of Gandhara Medical Institute of Medical Sciences will launch their magazine at the occasion of their second Annual Day on 14th November (today).

Former chief minister NWFP, Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao will preside over the function while provincial Speaker of the Assembly, Hidayatullah Khan Chamkani will be the chief guest.

Dr Muhammad Kabir founded Gandhara Institute of Medical Sciences, started functioning in October 1995. It has now Kabir College of Medicines, Sardar Begum Dental College, Rozeeda Kabir Basic Medical Science Block, and Naseer Teaching Hospital, recognised by PMDC, and Farkhanda School of Nursing, recognised by Pakistan Nursing School.

UN discusses Afghan relief operation today

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The United Nations will discuss the current situation and review assistance activities in northern Afghanistan today (Monday), UN officials said.

Representatives from UN agencies, ICRC, and NGOs have been invited to float suggestions to step up relief activities in winter, the UN update said. Meanwhile, the first meeting of the Afghanistan Programming Body (APB) took place, under Japanese Chairmanship in Islamabad.

The head of UN Special Mission to Afghanistan and the UN Coordinator apprised the meeting of the conditions in the war-torn country. The draft constitution of the APB, allowing for minor plans for the preparation of the 1999 Appeal, was approved as were planned for the appeal.

The strategy part of the appeal will be prepared in time for the Tokyo meeting of the Afghan Support Group to be held next week together with a summary of financial requirements.

FRONTIER POST

16 NOV 1998

UN to review relief work in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, Nov 15: The United Nations will discuss the current situation and review assistance activities in northern Afghanistan on Monday, UN officials said.

Representatives from UN agencies, ICRC, and NGOs have been invited to float suggestions to step up relief activities in winter, the UN Update said. Meanwhile, the first meeting of the Afghanistan Programming Body (APB) took place, under Japanese chairmanship in Islamabad.

Head of the UN special mission

to Afghanistan and the UN coordinator apprised the meeting of the conditions in the war-torn country.

The draft constitution of the APB, allowing for minor plans for the preparation of the 1999 Appeal, was approved as were planned for the appeal.

The strategy part of the appeal will be prepared in time for the Tokyo meeting of the Afghan Support Group to be held next week together with a summary of financial requirements. The Appeal projects will be issued in mid-December.—NNI

DAWN

16 NOV 1998

NATION 23 NOV 1993

UN-Taliban row affects widows, orphans

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Controversy over the return of the United Nations international staff to Kabul and Taliban are multiplying the miseries of thousands of widows and orphans in the Afghan capital.

UN officials say their international staff has not yet returned to Afghanistan due to Taliban "failure to fully implement the last month agreement with the United Nations."

"We have not yet sent international staff to Afghanistan and are still waiting for progress on the security agreement by Taliban," an official, associated with UN Office for Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) told NNI.

Taliban and the United Nations signed a "security agreement" in Islamabad on October 23 that had made the student militia responsible for the security of UN personnel and UN premises in Afghanistan. The 11-point agreement inked after five days of talks, wherein the two parties reached an understanding over the security arrangements for the UN personnel in

the war-torn country.

The United Nations pulled some 50 foreign workers out of Afghanistan on August 21 after the killing of an Italian UN worker Carmine Calo who was shot dead by an angry demonstration against the US Cruise Missile attack on Osama bin Laden in the eastern province of Khost.

The UN local staff is working in the Afghan capital, however, they face a lot of difficulties due to the absence of international staff. Some 40 thousands of widows and orphans in the same numbers depend on international organizations for food.

Under the Islamabad agreement a small team of the UN staff would have to return to Afghanistan to assess the situation after progress on the agreement by Taliban. However, the UN official said the accord has not been fully implemented and the return of international UN staff depends on the agreement's implementation.

Taliban were bound under the accord to give a detailed report about the killing of three staff members in Tali-

ban controlled areas this year. Two UN staff members Muhammad Hashim Bahsayar of the World Food Programme and Mohammad Naseer Habibi of the UN High Commissioner for refugees were found dead near the eastern city of Jalalabad on July 13. However, the student militia has failed to present satisfactory report about the incidents.

Under the agreement, Taliban would have to provide protection to the UN premises. It also guaranteed that if any UN staff member is detained they should be released within 72 hours in the absence of formal charges against them. Also that UN staff would be allowed if they want to visit any of its detained staff to provide them medical treatment and legal requirements.

The UN and other international relief agencies have other outstanding issues with Afghanistan dominant Taliban including equal access to women and girls, adequate health care for women and restrictions on working women. However, the agreement did not mention about the women issue.

Taliban have failed to honour accord: UN

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The United Nations international staff has yet not returned to Afghanistan due to Taliban's failure to fully implement the last month agreement with the United Nations, a UN official said on Sunday.

"We have not yet sent international staff to Afghanistan and are still waiting for progress on the security agreement by Taliban," the official, associated with UN Office for Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) told NNI.

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FRONTIER POST
16 NOV 1993

Unesco concerned over Taliban's HR record

PARIS: The Unesco director general, Federico Mayor, has expressed concern over the Taliban's lack of respect for the human and cultural rights of the people of Afghanistan after he received a letter written by author and academician Latif Pedram and co-signed by 14 other Afghan intellectuals, writers and academics, says a press release Thursday.

Reiterating the right of all to practice their mother tongue and be educated in it, Mayor explained that his concern was increased by the fact that the letter largely echoed a UN report on human rights in Afghanistan, presented to the UN General Assembly in late October, highlighting the Taliban's consistent disregard for all human rights, including the right to life, freedom of thought and the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

On the basis of both documents, Mayor declared: "Unesco is committed to upholding the rights of people everywhere to enjoy freedom of opinion and the full range of rights enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights whose 50th anniversary was celebrated this year. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural mosaic inhabited by a variety of peoples with their own cultural particularities and languages,

all of which should be respected. There can be no religious, moral or ethical defence of the Taliban's systematic disregard for these rights and of their determination to enforce Pashto-supremacy and root out the country's other languages and cultures.

As the Taliban extended their grip of terror on the long-affiliated country, it is time that the entire UN system and the international community move from the clearly ineffectual condemnation of abuses to actions which might stem them."

In his letter to the DG of Unesco, the literature professor of the University of Baghlan (Afghanistan) condemned "medieval repression" on the part of the Taliban, who are attempting to suppress the use of Persian-dari, spoken by over 60% of the Afghan population, and other minority languages. He accused the Taliban of practising a "ruthless policy of linguistic domination and ethnic cleansing."

He also drew attention to the Taliban's burning of books in the city of Puli-Khumri of 55,000 books of the public library of the Cultural Association of Hakim Nasser Khosrow Balkhi which included a collection of rare and ancient manuscripts in Persian-dari.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

27 NOV 1998

UN resumes food supplies to Afghans

ISLAMABAD, Nov 25: The United Nations is moving 300 tons of food to central Afghanistan after being assured by the Taliban that the supplies would be secure, UN office here announced on Wednesday.

More food will be moved into the Panjao, Waras and Behsud areas before winter snow blocks the supply routes, the World Food Programme (WFP) agency said.

Food stocks and vehicles of the WFP in the Hazarajat and Bamiyan regions were seized by the Taliban when the militia captured Shia central Afghanistan from opposition groups in September, causing a food crisis.

Later, the Taliban returned the vehicles but said the food supplies had been distributed to the needy.

A UN team was sent two weeks ago to assess the winter needs and the security situation in the two regions.

It reported on return that trade routes were active again with supplies coming in from Puli-Khumri in the northeast and Ghazni and Kabul to the south.

Staple food such as rice was readily available and locally produced potatoes were in surplus supply in Bamiyan bazaar but many people had no money to buy it, the team said.

However, the Shia leader Mohammad Akbari told the Deutsche Presse-Agentur in Kabul that the situation in Hazarajat was worse than it was last winter.

Aid agencies reported that grain crops were especially bad this year in the region and there was a danger of food shortages by the end of the coming winter.

A UN team which probed the war-ravaged area in summer had reported that nearly 160,000 people would need about 3,300 tons of food aid to survive the winter.

Despite a blockade of the region by the ruling Taliban, the WFP had stocked 1,500 tons of food during summer. But the stocks disappeared following a takeover of the region by the Taliban in August.

Early this month the Taliban authorities told WFP that they had distributed the food stocks to needy people in the region and in the adjacent Ghorband valley.—dpa

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

26 NOV 1998

Opposition calls for Osama's trial

KABUL, Nov 19: A spokesman for Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood said on Thursday Osama bin Laden was the "mastermind of crimes" and must stand trial.

The spokesman, Mohammad Aref, said the billionaire should leave Afghanistan and also accused him of collaborating in the Taliban military operations.

His comments came on the eve of the expiry of a Taliban deadline (Nov. 20) after which Bin Laden could be locally cleared of allegations that he had a hand in terrorism if Washington did not produce evidence in support of an indictment.

"We believe he is the mastermind of crimes and must be tried," Aref said.

"It doesn't matter for us against whom his crimes are directed. We condemn the crimes in their essence," he added.

The Taliban term Bin Laden a "national guest," a status which they claim is in agreement with opposition groups.

Aref said Osama "lives illegally" in Afghanistan and he should be deported to a third country.

"If he is a guest, he should retire to a room. No foreigner can take part in the fighting against the Afghan people," he said, referring

to Taliban military operations against Masood.

The Taliban's supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar has made it clear more than once that the Taliban have no plans to hand over Bin Laden to America or Saudi Arabia.

"We cannot comment on this now as Osama is not with us," Aref said after being asked if the alliance would hand him over to the US.

He blamed Osama entirely for allowing his ethnic Arab followers to take part in Taliban's operations which Aref said were "crimes against" the Afghan people.

"These Arabs have committed crimes; they have beheaded civilians and they should be punished," he said.

"Bin Laden uses his money for training mercenary groups to destabilize Afghanistan's northern neighbours, the Muslim Central Asian republics," Aref alleged.

"We have clear evidence that Osama is training terrorists and subversive groups in his camps to be sent to countries like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan," he claimed.

Washington has offered a reward of five million dollars for the capture and arrest of Bin Laden, who has been indicted by a US court. —AFP

Afghan rivals seek trial of Osama bin Laden

KABUL (AFP) - Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden is the "mastermind of crimes" and must stand trial, the official spokesman for Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood said Thursday.

The spokesman, Mohammad Aref, said the billionaire should leave Afghanistan and also accused him of actively collaborating in the Taliban military operations.

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DAWN 20 NOV 1998

FRONTIER POST

20 NOV 1998

US asks Taliban not to shelter terrorists

WASHINGTON (NNI)—A senior US State Department official Michael Malanonski has called on Taliban not to give refuge to international terrorists and bring Osama Bin Laden to justice.

He was speaking at a conference in Washington organised jointly by a non-governmental US organization, The Afghan Foundation and Central Asian Studies Institute affiliated with Jhon Hopkins University. The conference discussed the Afghan issue and the US role and policy in the region.

He asked Taliban to honour their commitments about anti-narcotics campaign and give up violations of human rights, women right and rights of ethnic minorities.

He threw light on the policy of the US administration and called for cease-fire and intra-Afghan dialogue aimed at finding a political settlement to the problem which can lead to the establishment of a broad based government representing all the Afghan ethnic groups.

He said that such a government should respect and implement international principles and norms and should effectively represent Afghanistan on international level and bilateral talks in issues like human rights and prevention of drugs and terrorism. He said that the United States had been making efforts to achieve these objectives.

He welcomed Taliban decision on banning mines but expressed concern that some Afghan groups were still using mines.

He said that the United States wants that other warring Afghan factions too should stop use of mines and foreign countries should not supply more

mines to Afghanistan. He also praised the progress in talks between the Taliban and UN Special Envoy on resumption of humanitarian operations and activities in Afghanistan.

He said: "The United States is very much interested in the resolution of the Afghan conflict. But eventually the Afghans themselves have to find a solution to the problem. The Afghans have proved to the world that outsiders cannot impose their will on them."

Malanonski said that the situation in Afghanistan had its impacts on all. And that is why nobody can shut his eyes on the issues like drugs, terrorism and human rights. The United States has given full attention to the Afghan issue, he added.

He said Iran and Pakistan had their vital interests and the spread of drugs, terrorism and lawlessness had caused loss to both the countries. "Refugees have taken shelter in the two countries putting burden on their economies," he added.

He said that he was in Peshawar when terrorist bomb blasts were taking place in Pakistan.

He went on to say that they had all along been discussing such issues in an organised manner in the meetings of Six Plus Two Group on Afghanistan. He said that they do understand each others view points and had been discussing ways and means for restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

He said that the United States was persuading not only these countries but all the states to make efforts for finding an amicable solution to the Afghan conflict and support the joint efforts of the United Nations and Organization of Islamic conference in this regard.

US working with UN, others to end Afghan conflict

ISLAMABAD (APP)—The United States has said it is working closely with the UN Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and "others" to see that conflict in Afghanistan comes to an end.

Karl Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, while speaking during a Worldnet Dialogue with Peshawar on the steps to reduce the risk of landmines in Afghanistan, also called for a broad-based government in the conflict-hit country.

"We are hoping that the contending factions - the Taliban and others that represent important ethnic groupings in Afghanistan, can come together in some fashion to establish a broad-based multi-ethnic representative government."

At this point, he said, the US does not support any single faction as the government of Afghanistan.

Inderfurth stated that the war has gone for far too long in Afghanistan and the US wants to see the conflict in that country come to an end.

"Afghanistan has been the subject of civil conflict, and of course the war against the Soviet occupation - all of this for over 20 years - it is time for that to come to an end," he said according to USIS.

He welcomed the Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar's announcement to ban the use of landmines in Afghanistan.

"We were very pleased recently in that regard that the leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, recently issued an edict, a directive banning the use of landmines in Afghanistan, saying that the Taliban would no longer use these, that these were killing innocent people, and urging all combatants in Afghanistan to cease the use, production, stockpiling of landmines."

NATION 02 NOV 1998

NATION
02 NOV 1998

NATION

03 NOV 1998

American project in Afghanistan shelved

WASHINGTON (PPI)—An American-funded training project in Afghanistan has closed down as a result of the US Cruise missile attack on the country in August.

The programme was funded by the American Oil Company, UNOCAL, which was once hoping to be involved in building a gas pipeline across the country from Turkmenistan to Pakistan.

However, since the US attack on suspected terrorist training camps in the Afghan mountains, UNOCAL has withdrawn funding.

Located in the southern city of Kandahar the headquarters of the head of the Taliban, Mullah Muhammad Omar the project ran for just one year.

It taught 400 Afghans up to the age of 30 different technical skills such as carpentry, welding, masonry and plumbing, as well as allowing them

to learn English.

Many young Afghan men have spent time fighting in the civil war. The head of the programme, Professor Azimi, said its aim was to give young people a chance in life, many have not been able to go to school because of the conflict in their country and they have no skills.

He said those who have just graduated from their courses can now set up their own businesses and that everybody, including the Taliban, was happy with the whole scheme. Run in conjunction with the American University of Nebraska. There were plans to set up similar projects in other Afghan cities such as Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif. But Professor Azimi said these plans have now also been shelved because of the lack of funds.

It is just another tragedy for young Afghans, who have suffered enough from the 20 years of conflict.

While UNOCAL would have had a skilled pool of technicians to draw from it, it became involved in building a gas pipeline across the country. Afghanistan itself badly needs skilled technicians for its own reconstruction.

And Kandahar is just one example, everywhere destruction can be seen from the time of the Soviet occupation and the subsequent fighting within the city between various factions before the Taliban took power.

Some reconstruction has just started, such as the repair of a few kilometres of main roads. But much more is needed.

And so too, is more training. There are about 300 medical students studying at the medical faculty of Kandahar University but training facilities are almost non-existent. Some students study agriculture, but other facilities have yet to reopen.

US rejects Taliban's deadline

By Our Staff Correspondent

WASHINGTON, Nov 10: The US has rejected the Taliban deadline of Nov 20 to provide evidence against Osama ben Laden saying "there is no expiration date on terrorist acts of this kind."

Spokesman Jamie Rubin of the State Department declined to answer further questions about whether Washington would provide the Taliban evidence of Osama's crimes because in cases where extradition is requested, evidence has to be given to other countries.

Asked about the Taliban deadline to prove that Bin Laden is a

terrorist, Rubin said it did not sound very serious to him.

"The federal district court handed down an indictment on this and other issues. These facts speak for themselves. The real issue is not as described by the Taliban; the real issue is why the Taliban continue to provide safe haven to Osama Bin Laden. We have made clear to the Taliban on several occasions that it must stop harbouring well-known terrorists like Osama Bin Laden. We believe that Osama Bin Laden should be brought to justice swiftly for his crimes."

DAWN

11 NOV 1998

UK trained Mujahideen in Stinger use: Times

By Our Staff Correspondent

LONDON, Nov 4: The British SAS (equivalent of Pakistan's Special Services Group — SSG) imparted training to the Afghan Mujahideen in operating the US Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, Wednesday's Times newspaper quoted a former British army officer as saying.

Ken Connor, a former warrant officer who retired from SAS in 1986 after 22 years' service, told The Times that the Mujahideen were "smuggled" into Britain to be trained by former SAS men at a country estate in the Home Counties, the Borders and the West County.

The former SAS man told the newspaper that Britain was requested by the Americans to help train Afghan guerillas in Britain because they wanted to keep the Stinger operation secret and were afraid that any covert operation in Afghanistan could be subject to public scrutiny in the United States under the Freedom of Information Act. "The CIA was determined to keep the mission secret," he said.

He told the newspaper that the training was administered by the SAS headquarters at Hereford, but the instructors were former members of the SAS regiment "recruited specifically for the task".

Mr Connor also said that a Gulf state was used for Stinger training operation, but he refused to name it.

He said the official authorization for the British involvement was "blurred" because of the recruitment of ex-SAS men but "I was still in the regiment and I was administering the training programme."

Mr Connor said that after the Stinger missiles arrived in Afghanistan, the Mujahideen began firing them at Soviet aircraft and gunship helicopters. "Several were shot down with heavy loss of life. Newspaper reports linking Britain with the supply of the missiles led to furious Soviet protests but deniability allowed the British government to maintain an air of injured innocence," he was quoted by the paper as saying.

Mr Connor said that some of the 300 Stinger missiles supplied to Afghanistan ended up on the black-market, despite an American offer to buy them back at \$3.0 million a piece. He said the offer jumped to \$30 million a piece after reports that Libya was trying to buy them. "The reward remained unpaid and the missiles had not been returned."

DAWN

05 NOV 1998

SAS trained Afghan rebels in Britain

LONDON—Afghan guerillas were smuggled into Britain during the 1980s and trained at secret camps by the SAS to fight the Russian army invading their country, according to a former instructor with the service, says a report published in *The Sunday Times*.

Members of the Mujahidin were brought in disguised as tourists and drilled in battle plans and communication skills designed to incapacitate the occupying Russians.

In tented enclosures hidden in the Scottish borders, the Highlands and northern England the tribesmen were taught how to blow the tails off MIG fighters, use heavy weapons such as mortars and artillery and how to plan and carry out attacks on enemy tank columns.

In the evenings, they ate *halal* meat bought from a Glasgow store and prepared by a Scottish chef. For entertainment they were shown cowboy films which their hosts knew would not contain any offending sexual scenes—although the SAS trainers did observe that the Afghan rebels cheered the Indians.

The revelations are made in a new book, *Ghost Force*, a history of the SAS written by Ken Connor, 57, one

of the unit's longest-serving officers. Connor said the training went smoothly: "The motto of the SAS is Who Dares Wins—if you try something nobody would believe possible, you can often pull it off."

"Nobody would think about having a group like the Mujahidin training in Scotland, but they did it and without it being discovered."

In the book, Connor claims the Americans originally funded the operation through the CIA, which paid the SAS to train the troops. In order to carry out the assignment without technically involving the British Army, the instructors resigned from the regiment—only to rejoin after the training was completed. The decision to locate the training in Britain was taken after a training operation in Afghanistan in 1982 was ambushed by Soviet forces. Two British passports fell into Russian hands, providing a publicity coup for the Russians.

Scotland was picked as a location for two bases because of its rugged terrain. Although Connor refused to reveal the location of the secret camps, he said they were close to existing military bases.

NATION 23 NOV 1998

Iran wants to divert Taliban pressure

By Umer Farooq

ISLAMABAD—As the Iranian forces stay back along the Afghan border after the completion of their military manoeuvres, it seems that the apparent Iranian objective is to compel Taliban to release military pressure on Commander Ahmad Shah Masood—Iranians last pawn in Afghanistan's power game.

The Iranians concluded their military exercises (Zulfiqar-2) along Afghan border on Monday last which according to Iranian authorities involved 200,000 men from the army, air force and marines. The area of the exercises reportedly included 50,000 square kilometers.

After the collapse of Northern Alliance, Commander Ahmad Shah Masood is the main recipient of Iranian arms and ammunition. According to reports between October 22-25, five C-130s loaded with arms and ammunition had been flown from Mashad to Kalayab—a Tajik town close to Afghan border from where it was taken to Ahmad Shah Masood's area on trucks. The Iranians have adopted a new way to deliver arms and ammunition to Ahmad Shah Masood through air sor-

ties after the closure of the land route.

Recently, an Iranian train carrying hundreds of tonnes of ammunition intended to be delivered to Ahmad Shah Masood in Afghanistan was intercepted by Kyrgyzstan authorities while on a transit. According to a report of Reuters news agency, the Kyrgyzstan authorities sent back the train to Iran. Kyrgyzstan used to allow transit to Iranian trains because of Iranian claims that these trains carry humanitarian assistance. The land route for Iranian arms to Ahmad Shah Masood has been closed following the interception of this train as Kyrgyzstan has put restriction on transit to Iranian trains.

The Iranians have adopted a two-pronged strategy to influence the military situation in Afghanistan, a) by providing arms and ammunition to Ahmad Shah Masood, b) by keeping a military presence along Afghan border for compelling Taliban to release military pressure on Ahmad Shah Masood.

However, some of the experts believe that the strength of Iranian forces deployed along Afghan border is much less than what is stated by the Iranian authorities. All along the period of exercises the strength of Iranian military never reached the figure of

200,000.

Another element in the strategy of the Iranians seems to be the recruitment from Afghan refugees camps located in Iran and building an anti-Taliban force which could fight along Ahmad Shah Masood Militia. According to a report, 1,500 such recruits led by Gul Muhammad Pehlavan—the brother of General Malik have reached Panjeshir Valley recently.

As against the Iranian policy to widen the wedge between Taliban and Ahmad Shah Masood, there is an opinion in Pakistan that some kind of reconciliation between the two Afghan groups can bring stability to Afghanistan.

Recently, an Afghan trader, who is working as an adviser to the Saudi Royal family, has brokered a truce between Ahmad Shah Masood and Taliban. The two sides even exchanged prisoners.

Gradually Taliban are paying heed to the advice of putting up an acceptable face as they had released all the Iranian prisoners held by them after the capture of Mazar-e-Sharif. However, an Islamabad-based Afghan diplomat told *The Nation* that the Iranians are still holding 80 Taliban as prisoners.

Iran starts wargames near Afghan border

TEHRAN (AFP) - The Iranian army was to launch the main part of large-scale military exercises involving 200,000 troops near the Afghan border late Saturday night, despite an easing of tension with the Taliban militia.

The Iranian forces will launch a series of nocturnal assaults on mock enemy targets in the Zabol region in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, army spokesman Brigadier-General Hassan Barati said, state radio reported.

Up to 200,000 men, dozens of jetfighters and hundreds of tanks are expected to be deployed in the widely-publicized Zolfaqr-2 exercises over an area of 50,000 square kilometers which includes Lake Hamoun on the Afghan border.

On Sunday, the army's airforce unit will demonstrate their power in a series of air shows, the general said, adding that the main operations will start on Monday.

'The rapid deployment and movement of the troops and their high morale is reminiscent of the eight-year war against Iraq,' the army said

in a statement.

The army began preparations for the maneuvers two months ago in the wake of tension with the Taliban Islamic militia over the murder in Afghanistan of nine Iranian diplomats and a journalist in August.

The maneuvers will take pace on a long border stretch from Zabol to the northeastern province of Khorasan. In addition to army troops, tens of thousands of the elite forces of the Revolutionary Guards are stationed at the border.

The principal stage of the maneuvers was initially due to be held in early October, to mark the anniversary of the start of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

But the authorities repeatedly postponed the exercises as Tehran awaited the outcome of a mediation in the row between Iran and the Taliban regime ruling Afghanistan by UN special envoy Lakhtar Brahimi.

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06 NOV 1993

NATION

NATION 01 NOV 1993

DAWN 02 NOV 1998

Khatami terms Taliban a danger to region

TEHRAN, Nov 1: Iranian President Mohammad Khatami on Sunday termed the Taliban "dangerous" as his forces staged a military parade near the Afghan border on the eve of massive wargames.

"What happens in Afghanistan nowadays is not just the problem of countries which border Afghanistan, but that of the whole region," Khatami said in talks with visiting Tajik Foreign Minister Talbek Nazarov.

"What the Taliban movement does in the name of Islam is dangerous for the entire region," he said.

He voiced concern over the "continuation of war and bloodletting in Afghanistan" and called for a stable and broad-based government as the "only solution to the crisis."

Relations between Iran and Afghanistan hit an all-time low in August when Taliban soldiers raided Iran's consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif and killed nine Iranian diplomats and a journalist.

IRAN-EGYPT COOPERATION: Iran called on Sunday for a joint stand with Egypt against Israeli "plots," saying such cooperation would help improve relations between the two countries.

"Fighting Israeli plots is the best way to solve the existing problems between Iran and Egypt and to bring the two countries closer to each other," Iranian deputy parliamentary speaker Hassan Ruhani said in talks with the head of the Egyptian interests section, Mohammad Fathi Refahe.

The official IRNA news agency quoted Ruhani, who is also secretary of the National Security

Council, Iran's top political and military decision-making body, as saying that Tehran and Cairo wanted closer relations, "as indicated by the current parliamentary exchanges and economic cooperation."

Tehran and Cairo, which had traditionally good relations, grew apart after Iran's 1979 revolution, over Egypt's moves to make peace with Israel and its acceptance of the Shah following his overthrow.

But the two countries have in the past year taken a number of steps aimed at normalizing relations, partly because of Egypt's critical stand of Israel's current rightwing government.

Ruhani defended his country's opposition to the Middle East peace process, saying "it has so far done nothing to help Palestinians to regain their rights."

"The current division and discord in the Muslim world and the conflict between Palestinian groups over security for the Zionists is the main goal of those who invented the capitulation process," he charged.

"The only solution to the Palestinian question is unity in the Muslim world and fighting the Zionist regime's expansionist policies," Ruhani added.

On Friday, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei attacked Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for signing the Wye River agreement with Israel, calling him a traitor.

The accord, signed on Oct 23, provides for a further Israeli military pullback from 13 per cent of the West Bank in return for tougher Palestinian measures against anti-Israeli violence.—AFP

Iran warns Taliban to punish killers of diplomats

TEHRAN: Iran on Sunday issued a new warning to the Taliban in Afghanistan to arrest and punish the killers of Iranian diplomats in Afghanistan in August and start peace talks with other Afghan factions.

"Taliban must respond to the rest of our demands by yielding to the international decisions on Afghanistan," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Raza Asefi.

"Taliban must learn to take responsibility for its violations of international regulations or face the consequences of its actions," he told the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

Asefi said Iran's "firm policies forced the Taliban to meet many of Iran's demands, including returning the bodies of nine diplomats and a journalist killed in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif by Taliban militiamen on August 8 and the release of Iranian prisoners last month". "With this understanding, now too they must meet our other demands and arrest and punish the killers," he said.

The spokesman also reiterated repeated calls by Tehran for a broad-based government in Afghanistan representing all ethnic groups and a peaceful end to the Afghan conflict.

"Iran's Foreign Ministry is closely following developments in Afghanistan because they have direct impact on stability and security in Iran," he said.

Both the United Nations and the "Six-Plus-Two" — a grouping of Afghanistan's neighbours, Russia and the United States — called in September for the Taliban to enter peace talks with opposition groups.

Tensions between Tehran and the Taliban mounted after the militia's military gains in northern Afghanistan and the murder of the diplomats in August. Iran has dispatched tens of thousands of troops to the border with Afghanistan.—AFP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

30 NOV 1998

FRONTIER POST

30 NOV 1998

Iran issues fresh warning to Taliban

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"Taliban must respond to the rest of our demands by yielding to international decisions" on Afghanistan, said foreign ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi.

"Taliban must learn to take responsibility for its violations of international regulations or face the consequences of its actions," he told the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

Asefi said Iran's "firm policies forced the Taliban to meet many of Iran's demands," including returning the bodies of nine diplomats and a journalist killed in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif by Taliban militiamen on August 8 and the release of Iranian prisoners last month.

"With this understanding, now too they must meet our other de-

mands and arrest and punish the killers," he said.

The spokesman also reiterated repeated calls by Tehran for a broad-based government in Afghanistan including all ethnic groups in Afghanistan and a peaceful end to the Afghan conflict.

"Iran's foreign ministry is closely following developments in Afghanistan because they have direct impact on stability and security in Iran," he said.

Both the United Nations and the "Six-Plus-Two" — a grouping of Afghanistan's neighbours, Russia and the United States — called in September for the Taliban, which controls around three-quarters of Afghanistan, to enter peace talks with opposition groups.

Tensions between Tehran and the Taliban mounted after the militia's military gains in northern Afghanistan and the murder of the diplomats in August.

Iran has dispatched tens of thousands of troops to the border with Afghanistan.

Iranian FM to discuss Taliban with S. Arabia

RIYADH, Nov 5: Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi is expected in Riyadh on Saturday for talks with Saudi officials over the Taliban.

The minister will also perform Umra before the talks, Iran's ambassador to the kingdom Mohammad Reza Nuri said, quoted by Saudi daily Al-Riyadh.

Kharazi is expected to meet

Saudi King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah ibn Abdel Aziz for bilateral talks and consultations on the situation in Afghanistan.

Saudi-Iranian relations have considerably improved since the election in May last year of moderate President Mohammad Khatami.

Former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani made a 10-day visit to Saudi Arabia in February.—AFP

Iran warns Taliban to punish diplomats killers

TEHRAN (AFP) - Iran on Sunday issued new warnings to the Taliban militia to arrest and punish the killers of Iranian diplomats in Afghanistan in August and start peace talks with other Afghan factions.

"Taliban must respond to the rest of our demands by yielding to international decisions" on Afghanistan, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi.

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NATION

30 NOV 1998

DAWN 30 NOV 1998

Islamabad denies sending military aid to Taliban

ALMATY, Nov 3: The Minister of state for foreign affairs, Mr Mohammad Siddique Kanju, on Tuesday denied accusations that Pakistan had sent military assistance to the Taliban.

"Support for humanitarian and food supplies is very much there," Siddique Kanju told journalists after meeting his Kazakh counterpart in Almaty, Kazakhstan. "It will be humanitarian aid and nothing else."

Pakistan also had sent such humanitarian aid to the northern alliance, fighting the Taliban in the northern part of the country near its border with Central Asia, Kanju added.

Kazakh Foreign Minister Kasymjomart Tokayev said the two sides disagreed on whether or not to extend recognition to the Taliban, which Pakistan has done.

Kazakhstan also supported non-interference in the conflict by Pakistan, Iran or any other state, he said.

"It's necessary to cease interference from outside and give Afghan forces the possibility to solve their own problems," Tokayev said.

Kazakhstan, which along with other Central Asian countries, is concerned about the instability the conflict is creating in the region, is not yet ready to recognize the Taliban, he added.

"We think that the government needs to be a government of multi-national agreement ... consisting of different political forces," Tokayev said.

Tokayev also expressed the hope that Kazakhstan would be allowed to join the "six-plus-two" group of Afghanistan's neighbours — Pakistan, China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — and Russia and the United States.

The group met on Sept 21 under United Nations auspices to prevent the Afghan war from escalating into an armed conflict with Iran.

Mr Siddique Kanju's Central Asian tour is designed to focus the actions of the region in implementing decisions taken by the six-plus-two group. Kanju and Tokayev said the exchange of information on the Taliban and Afghanistan was beneficial to both sides and they hoped such meetings would continue. —AFP

Kanju off to Central Asia to discuss Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (APP) — Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Muhammad Siddique Khan Kanju, accompanied by Additional Secretary (Afghanistan) Iftikhar Murshed left Saturday for the Central Asian Republics to discuss the evolving situation in Afghanistan.

A Foreign Office Spokesman told a Press briefing that the two officials will visit Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan for this purpose.

"The visit takes place in the wake of the highly successful UN-OIC mission to the region led by the U.N. Secretary General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi."

Pakistan, he said, has consistently tried to coordinate its policies on Afghanistan closely with all neighbouring countries.

The Spokesman recalled that the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs visited Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in August.

"The purpose of the current visit is to hold consultations on further action in implementing the 'Points of Common Understanding' reached at the Six Plus Two meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers in New York on 21 September this year."

The Six Plus Two group met in New York on 29 October and among other things commended the progress made by Brahimi's mission.

Pakistan, which is a leading member of the group, has reiterated its fullest cooperation to the U.N. for the early restoration of durable peace and stability to Afghanistan.

NATION

04 NOV 1993

DAWN

04 NOV 1993

Pakistan-Turkmenistan joint mission to visit Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (APP)-Pakistan and Turkmenistan have decided to send a joint mission to Afghanistan as part of the international initiatives to bring about durable peace to the worn-torn country.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Siddique Khan Kanju told reporters on Friday at the PAF base, on his return from a visit to Central Asian States that the joint mission's visit to Afghanistan will be line with the UN and OIC missions and exercise.

The Minister visited Uzbekistan, Kyrgistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan on the specific instruction of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to discuss the evolving situation in Afghanistan for bringing sustainable peace to this war-ravaged country.

Kanju said, the purpose of the mission is within the framework of the United Nations to bring about sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

Responding to a question if the Joint Mission will also like to visit Iran, the Minister said, "Definitely, we are already in touch with Tehran which is a friendly and a brotherly country and a very important member of the Six plus Two."

About the schedule of the Joint Mission, he said, we initially will go and start off with Taliban.

Responding to a question, the Minister said, Pakistan is the only country which suffered most from the Afghan conflict. "We are the people for whom peace in Afghanistan is very important and vital."

Kanju described his discussions with his counterparts in the CARs as very "fruitful and constructive", which he said, was within the framework of the UN and the OIC missions which recently visited the region.

Kanju dispelled the impression, while responding to a question, about

any differences between Pakistan and Iran. He said:

"Let me be very clear about this. There are no differences between Iran and Pakistan," adding, in fact it was distressing that there were and there is tension between the two brotherly countries - Afghanistan and Iran - on their borders and that was a major concern."

But with the visit of the UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, the national security concerns of the Iranian President were met and things should be moving, he said, but reminded that this is not an easy task.

"What we have to see is that we are along with UN on the right track to achieve the task of durable (and sustainable) peace."

"As far as Iran and Pakistan are concerned, we do not have any problem with each other at all," the Minister reiterated.

Pakistan denies supplying military aid to Taliban

ALMATY (AFP) - Pakistan denied Tuesday accusations that it has sent military assistance to Taliban who control 90 per cent of Afghanistan.

"Support for humanitarian and food supplies is very much there," Foreign Minister Siddique Kanju told journalists after meeting his Kazakh counterpart. "It will be humanitarian aid and nothing else."

Pakistan also has sent such humanitarian aid to the northern alliance, which has been fighting the Taliban in the northern part of the country near its border with Central Asia, Kanju said.

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Kanju's Central Asian tour is designed to focus the actions of the region in implementing decisions taken by the Six-Plus-Two group.

Kanju and Tokayev said the exchange of information on the Taliban and Afghanistan was beneficial to both sides and they hope such meetings will continue.

NATION

07 NOV 1999

NATION

04 NOV 1999

NATION 10 NOV 1993

Pakistan refuses visa to Hekmatyar

ISLAMABAD, Nov 9: Pakistan has refused to grant visa to Afghanistan's former Prime Minister and Chief of Hizb-e-Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who wanted to travel to Peshawar to attend the funeral of his nephew, a statement faxed to NNI from Tehran said on Monday.

The Pakistan Embassy in Tehran refused to issue a visa to Hekmatyar, saying that the Foreign Office in Pakistan did not agree with the issuance of visa to him, the statement said.

"We knew that Pakistan would not want to annoy Washington by allowing Hekmatyar to visit Pakistan, though, there were many occasions that Hekmatyar yearned to visit Pakistan, but fearing to hear a similar negative response, he gave up," it added.

"The refusal of visa to HIA leader for attending the funeral of a family member was beyond imagination, which could not be expected even from a Hindu against a Muslim."

"We were skeptical about the Islamabad's intentions towards Hekmatyar. Let this be understood by all those who did not know Islamabad's intention that why it supported other against Hezb-I-Islami and blocked HIA to coming into power in Kabul," the statement said.

It recalled that soon after the fall of Communist regime in 1992 Pakistani authorities supported Rabbani against Hezb-I-Islami and accepted him as the president of Afghanistan, who later joined hands with Russia and India and burnt the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul.—NNI

DAWN

10 NOV 1993

Kanju discusses Afghan issue with Uzbek FM

ISLAMABAD (APP) — The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mr. Muhammad Siddique Khan Kanju, held one and a half hour discussions on Afghanistan with the Uzbek Foreign Minister Mr. Abdulaziz Hafizovick Kamilov.

The Minister of State was assisted in the meeting by S. Iftikhar Murshed, Additional Secretary (Afghanistan & PP), Mr Shahryar Rashed, Ambassador of Pakistan to Uzbekistan as well as Embassy officials, according to a fax message received here from Tashkent.

The talks were held in an extremely cordial atmosphere and focused on the latest developments in Afghanistan. The two sides have agreed to continue their dialogue on a regular basis in order to promote a durable settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan.

The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs also availed of his presence in Uzbekistan to meet Pakistan nationals residing in Tashkent. He urged them to continue good work in promoting economic and commercial collaboration between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

The Minister of State also briefed selected members of the diplomatic corps in Tashkent, on the latest regional developments.

DAWN

03 NOV 1993

Pakistan refuses visa to Hekmatyar

ISLAMABAD (NNI) — Pakistan has refused to grant visa to Afghanistan's former Prime Minister and Chief of Hizb-e-Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who wanted to travel to Peshawar to attend the funeral of his nephew, a fax message received here on Monday from Tehran.

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Pak-Turkmen bid for Afghan peace soon

ISLAMABAD (Agencies) — Pakistan and Turkmenistan have decided to send a Joint Mission to Afghanistan as part of the international initiatives to bring about durable peace to the worn-torn country.

Siddique Khan Kanju Minister of State for Foreign Affairs told reporters Friday at the PAF base, on his return from a visit to Central Asian States, the Joint Mission's visit to Afghanistan will be in complementary to the UN and OIC exercise.

The minister visited Uzbekistan, Kyrgistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan on the specific instruction of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to discuss the evolving situation in Afghanistan for bringing sustainable peace to this war-ravaged country.

Turkmenistan, "which has always been very neutral. In fact, throughout the years it has shown it," the minister said.

FRONTIER POST

07 NOV 1993

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL 26 NOV 1998

Pakistan, Uzbekistan to jointly work for Afghan peace

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Uzbekistan Wednesday vowed to work together for restoration of a durable peace in Afghanistan by encouraging all Afghan factions to sit together to find ways for peaceful settlement of the problem.

"We have to create an environment for promotion of a lasting peace in Afghanistan by reaching a common position," Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Abdul Aziz Kamilov and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Siddique Khan Kanju said while talking to reporters at the PAF Base Chaklala.

The two ministers also spoke about the constructive and significant role being played by Six Plus Two Ministerial Group under the supervision of the United Nations for solution of Afghan imbroglio saying it is important that cooperation among the group should continue so as to

forge better understanding of the problems and explore ways for its solution.

Kamilov, who arrived here Wednesday evening on a two-day official visit, said purpose of his tour was to discuss bilateral and regional issues with particular reference to Afghan problem. He added there

Photo on Page 5

must be a close coordination among all regional countries, especially Pakistan and Uzbekistan, on the issue in order to find a common position.

"It is important that the two countries must make collective efforts to bring about a lasting peace in Afghanistan," Kamilov said and added Uzbekistan on its part was cooperating with Pakistan at bilateral level as well as at the forums of United Nations and Six Plus Two.

Replying to a question, he said the two countries had constantly been in touch with each other, holding regular consultations at various levels to promote cooperation on bilateral as well as regional issues.

Siddique Kanju also underlined the need of collective efforts saying that creation of an environment conducive for restoration of durable peace was inevitable and this was possible only by bringing all the protagonists to negotiating table.

He eulogised role of Six Plus Two in this regard and said that it is an international instrument paving way for resolution of the conflict.

He hoped that Kamilov's visit would go a long way in promoting understanding between the two countries on the issue and prove to be a step forward in right direction.—PPI

Taliban to attend peace moot only if invited as govt Nawaz renews call for peace in Afghanistan

- extends support to '6+2' meeting in Tashkent

From SIKANDER HAYAT

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan has assured the visiting Uzbekistan Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov of its full support to the UN-assisted meeting of the Six Plus Two on Afghanistan which is likely to be held in Tashkent later next month.

Both Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz, in separate meetings with Kamilov, expressed Pakistan's determination to backup all efforts for a durable peace in Afghanistan. Both conveyed to the visiting leader that peace in Afghanistan would open up enormous opportunities for Pakistan and Uzbekistan to expand bilateral

cooperation.

Uzbekistan foreign minister expressed his satisfaction over the warm response he received from the Pakistani leadership over the Six Plus Two meeting that his country is going to host.

He also shared with his guests the growing perception that the Taliban are becoming responsive to the international initiatives for peace in their country.

The two press releases issued Thursday by the Pakistan on the visit of Kamilov made no mention of the Northern Alliance nor they mentioned the concept of broad-based government in Afghanistan.

Both sides were equally anxious to increase the bilateral coop-

eration particularly in trade and commerce which they agreed was not possible without obtaining permanent peace in Afghanistan.

The Six Plus Two comprises countries with common border with Afghanistan—Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, China-plus Russia and United States. In pursuance of UN and OIC efforts their foreign ministers met in New York in September and agreed on "Points of Common Understanding", to which the Taliban government has also positively responded. The Tashkent meeting will be the follow-up of the New York consensus.

According to Afghan Islamic Press, the Uzbekistan foreign minister also met with the Taliban government's principal spokesman in Pakistan, Mulla Wakil Ahmed, in Islamabad, in what is the first official contact between the two government. The Taliban leader described his meeting with the visiting foreign minister positive.

FRONTIER POST

27 NOV 1998

NATION

02 NOV 1998

Taliban-Masood efforts for Afghan peace hit snags

By Nafees Takkar

ISLAMABAD - Taliban and former defence minister Commander Ahmad Shah Masood are facing certain hurdles on their way towards the exchange of prisoners as the week-long ceasefire brokered by the Saudi-based Afghan businessman Syed Jalal Nabigha will end today (Monday).

Syed Jalal who was in Kabul till filing of this report is now trying to extend the duration of the ceasefire between the two rival sides and thus have time for reaching on a point acceptable to both Taliban and Masood.

Taliban sources in Kabul expressed their optimism over the outcome

of the Jalal-led peace mission in a telephonic talk on Sunday. "The negotiations are in progress and there are hopes of positive results," said Afghanistan Bakhtar news agency.

The progress on the exchange of prisoners was blocked by some demands from the two sides which put in trouble the peace mission of Syed Jalal Nabigha.

Taliban demanded that all Pakistani Taliban that were in the custody of Masood should also be released. On the other hand, Masood demanded the release of the former governor of Herat General Ismail Khan who is behind the bars in Kandahar since May 1997.

Taliban have rejected the Masood's demand, arguing that Masood should

limit the scope of his talks and demands only to matters relating to his party called Shura-i-Nazaar. They said that General Ismail Khan was a man of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, the ousted president of Afghanistan, and that Masood should not widen the scope of the terms and conditions.

Masood representatives also did not acknowledge the prisoners that were released by Taliban, saying they were not the fighters of their party.

Taliban and Masood agreed for a week-long ceasefire on 26th of October.

The ceasefire was brokered by an influential Saudi-based Afghan trader Syed Jalal who claims to be the advisor of the Saudi royal family.

Afghan rivals truce ends without prisoners' swap

KABUL (AFP) - A one-week truce between the Taliban and the opposition to exchange prisoners ended Monday after little success and the Islamic militia said there was no new agreement yet to extend it.

But the Taliban 'are willing' to discuss a fresh truce for a swap of prisoners, senior Taliban spokesman Wakil Ahmad told AFP.

'No truce extension has taken place so far,' he said, speaking by satellite telephone from Kandahar.

The week-long lull in fighting was brokered by a Saudi-based Afghan intellectual and businessman Sayed Jalal to allow an exchange of prisoners between the Taliban and Ahmad Shah Masood.

Sources close to Masood earlier said

that Jalal had succeeded in securing a two-week extension to the truce.

Ahmad also said the Taliban had not yet considered Masood's proposal that the Islamic militia agree to free a top opposition commander Ismael Khan, a former governor of western Herat province.

Khan has been in the custody of the Taliban for the past two years.

A spokesman for Masood said the opposition was holding a top Taliban official Mulla Mujahid and that he would be freed in exchange for Ismael Khan.

The Taliban spokesman said that Ismael Khan could not be included in a swap because he belonged to former president Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami and not to Masood's

Shurai Nazar faction.

'Mulla Mujahid is not our former defence minister as claimed by the opposition. He was only a group leader whom they want to portray as a senior personality', Ahmad said.

Under the agreement mediated by Jalal both sides were to swap 1,000 prisoners each and then exchange the remaining people, Ahmad said.

But hardly any exchange took place, while both the sides accused each other of playing tricks.

'They have not been honest. They brought the local people for the swap,' the Taliban spokesman claimed.

He accused Masood forces of attacking the Taliban positions in Nahrin district of northern Baghlan province during the week-long truce.

NATION

03 NOV 1998

FRONTIER POST

Afghan land-mines a great tragedy, says Inderfurth

WASHINGTON (PR)—Afghanistan remains one of "the great tragedies in the world with respect to land-mines," according to Karl Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs.

Speaking during a Worldnet Dialogue with Peshawar (October 29) Inderfurth recalled a recent incident in Afghanistan in which more than 40 people died when a bus carrying a wedding party hit an anti-tank mine.

"So the tragedy of land-mines in Afghanistan continues. It is one of the most heavily affected land-mine countries in the world, and it's one that we in the United States have been doing a great deal to address," he said.

Despite such incidents in Afghanistan and elsewhere, Inderfurth said there is "some good news" to report. He said efforts by the international community to reduce the risks posed by the worldwide land-mine crisis and other "success stories" have been catalogue in a new State Department report entitled "Hidden Killers."

Inderfurth was joined on the programme by Pat Patierno, Director of the State Department's office of humanitarian de-mining programmes. Patierno said since 1993, the United States has committed more than \$19 million to Afghanistan for various de-mining programmes, including mine awareness, mine mapping, marking, surveying work, and mine clearance.

"It is by far the largest programme in the world, and it is the largest contribution we have made to any country in the world since we have been active in humanitarian de-mining," Patierno said.

He said the United States expects that level of support to continue and reported that Congress, in approving a new budget for 1999, allocated \$35 million for State Department humanitarian de-mining assistance around the world.

NATION

03 NOV 1998

Pak backing of Taliban threatens Asia: India

NEW DELHI (AFP) - Indian army chief General V.P. Malik warned Thursday that Pakistan's support for Islamic fundamentalists, like the Taliban in Afghanistan, could wreak havoc across Asia.

Malik told senior defence officials here that the Taliban, "conceived and supported by Pakistan," spelt danger for the entire continent.

If the "experiment" succeeds, "the spread of fundamentalism accompanied by violence may soon spread across south, west and central Asia," said Malik, whose remarks coincided with India-Pakistan talks in New Delhi on cross-border terrorism.

Malik also blasted Pakistan for supporting insurgencies in Indian territory, especially in the occupied Kashmir.

"If militancy grows too big, both the initiator and the affected nation will be tempted to use conventional war means," he said.

The head of the Indian army in Kashmir, meanwhile, admitted the impossibility of preventing Muslim militants in Pakistan sneaking across the border. "No matter how many forces are deployed (on the border), the geography of the area favours infiltration," General Krishan Pal was quoted as saying by Thursday's local newspapers.

"Both local and foreign militants continue to infiltrate into the state," Pal said, stressing that the situation in Kashmir could only be solved through dialogue.

13 NOV 1998

Russia calls for world action against Taliban

TEHRAN: Russia has called for immediate international action against the Taliban by terming it as a basic cause of continuation of bloodshed in the war-ravaged Afghanistan, reports Radio Tehran.

A spokesman of the Russian Foreign Ministry while addressing a press conference in Moscow said that warmongering policies of the Taliban have made the situation in Afghanistan very tense. He said that the activities and actions of the student militia have posed a major threat to regional security.—NNI

03 NOV 1998
THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Iran, Uzbekistan call for broad-based govt in Kabul

TEHRAN: Iran and Uzbekistan has called for the formation of a broad-based government in Afghanistan through political dialogue.

The appeal was made here in the talks between Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi and his Uzbek counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov, who was on a one-day visit to Iran.

Their talks also highlighted the need for regional cooperation to help end the Afghan crisis, the Iranian official news agency IRNA reported on Wednesday. The Afghan Taliban militia should respect the wishes of the

international community and implement the UN Security Council resolutions. The two ministers expressed grave concerns over growing terrorism, insecurity and illicit trade in armaments and narcotics in the region.

On bilateral ties, they said that both Tehran and Tashkent are determined to enhance bilateral ties and consolidate regional cooperation. Uzbekistan attaches particular significance to expanding its cooperation with Iran in commercial, economic and telecommunications sectors, Kamilov said.—NNI

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

26 NOV 1998

EU threats to cut Afghan aid: clarification

BRUSSELS: Reference to a report in The News by Rahimullah Yusufzai headlined '30 agencies to be hit by EU threat to curtail Afghan aid' (Nov 4), the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) issued the following clarification: "This Office has not terminated funding for humanitarian activities in Afghanistan. It has, however, suspended aid in Kabul. This was because it had become impossible for non-governmental organisations to work in an effective, principled and non-discriminatory manner, the culmination of a crisis between non-governmental organisations and the Taliban authorities which ended with the expulsion of NGOs from the capital.

"Outside Kabul, the security situation after American strikes in August forced expatriates to leave the country. Since ECHO projects could not continue without expatriate monitoring, this meant they could not proceed as originally planned. These developments had nothing to do with Commissioner Bonino's brief arrest in Kabul last year.

"Regarding Sandy Gall's Afghanistan Appeal, we fail to understand why the suspension of ECHO funding would bring Sandy Gall's operations in Afghanistan to an end, given that his Appeal started in 1983, long before ECHO was created in 1992, and that he has confirmed to ECHO that he has had other sources of funding throughout the time he has been an ECHO partner.

"Sandy Gall's Afghanistan Appeal was included in an ECHO financial plan for the entire country, worth ECU 10 million, that would have covered the period July 1998-March 1999. The Appeal would have received ECU 180,000 for its work in Jalalabad, the same amount as was allocated to it in 1998. But the Financial Plan was cancelled in the light of the situation this summer.

"Commissioner Bonino is well aware that Afghanistan's people, particularly women and children, are enduring great hardship as a result of the civil war in that country. That is why ECHO has made available ECU 80.68 million for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan since 1995. ECHO is monitoring developments closely, and hopes to resume aid as soon as the situation stabilises. Aid will be restored if and when it is possible for programmes to resume and to be carried out in full respect of humanitarian principles, with expatriate monitoring."

Uzbek FM holds talks with Taliban

ISLAMABAD, Nov 26: The visiting Uzbek foreign minister, Abdulaziz Kamilov, on Thursday held a detailed meeting with a high-level Taliban delegation in Islamabad and extended invitation to them to attend the forthcoming meeting of the "Six Plus Two" group in Tashkent.

The two-member Taliban team, headed by their senior spokesman Maulvi Wakeel Ahmed Mutawakil, flew into Islamabad for the meeting, which was first contact between the two sides. He was accompanied by chief of protocol in Kandahar Haji Fazal Muhammad.

"We removed Uzbek leaders misunderstanding about the policies of Afghanistan and told them that our government wants friendly ties with all neighbouring states," Mutawakil told NNI after the meeting.—NNI

DAWN

27 NOV 1998

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL
25 NOV 1998



YANGI-QALA: Afghan warlord Ahmad Shah Masood (L) heads towards the frontline of northern Kunduz province with his commanders in war-torn Afghanistan, Masood's forces are fighting the Taliban militia who are controlling more than 80 per cent of the country in north.—AFP



ANDARAB: Afghan fighters loyal to warlord Ahmad Shah Masood take out ammunitions from a Soviet-made helicopter MI-6 in northern Afghanistan, on Saturday.—AFP

DEADLY WEAPONS



ANDARAB: Two Afghan boys help unload rocket-propelled grenades in this northern city of Afghanistan. According to a United Nations report nearly 400,000 children have been killed in the war-ravaged country during the last two decades.—AFP

DAWN

04 NOV 1993

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

16 NOV 1988



Afghan children in a ruined house collect pieces of metal in Kabul. The children sell the scrap for pocket money. — Reuters photo



A view of the Pak-Afghan border between Chitral and Afghanistan's Kunar province. The vehicle is parked in Pakistani border town of Arandu while across the stream is Dokalam and Barikot in Afghanistan. — Photo by Rahimullah Yusutzai

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

20 NOV 1988



FRONTIER POST

07 NOV 1993

NATION

FRONTIER POST

'100 killed in Taliban attacks'

KABUL (AFP) - Seventy civilians were killed and more than 100 injured during Taliban aerial bombardments at Taloqan in north Afghanistan, opposition sources said Thursday.

A further 38 residents were shot dead in neighbouring Takhtar and Koprak villages as the militia was forced into retreat by forces loyal to ethnic Tajik commander, Ahmad Shah Masood, they said.

The bombings were a precursor to a Taliban offensive on the strategic city of Taloqan, launched Wednesday morning and signalling a bloody end to a two-week ceasefire agreement.

On Monday, the Taliban had offered to extend the ceasefire agreement.

Independent confirmation of the battles was not immediately available.

Air traffic at Kabul airport has been heavier than usual over the past two nights prompting local speculation of further Taliban strikes.

Meanwhile, Forces loyal to Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood have repelled Taliban troops from the area they captured in the latest opposition offensive in Takhar province, a spokesman said Thursday.

Masood's spokesman Mohammad Aref admitted the religious militia had advanced close to the northeastern province's capital of Taloqan in Wednesday's massive attack which involved thousands of turbaned fighters.

Masud recaptures lost ground in Takhar province

KABUL: Forces loyal to Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood have repelled Taliban troops from the areas they captured in the latest offensive in Takhar province, a spokesman said Thursday.

Masud's spokesman Mohammad Arif admitted the religious militia had advanced close to the northeastern province's capital of Taloqan in Wednesday's massive attack which involved thousands of turbaned fighters.

"The Taliban were pushed back towards Bangi where fighting is still going on," Arif told AFP from his northern base by satellite telephone Bangi, 20 kilometres west of Taloqan, divides Takhar which is held by Masud. Arif said the opposition troops were surprised by the Taliban attack, which subsided after a counter-offensive launched by Masud's loyalists.—AFP

Taliban bombings kill over 100 civilians

Heavy fighting rages near Taloqan

KABUL (AFP) - Seventy civilians were killed and more than 100 injured during Taliban aerial bombardments at Taloqan in north Afghanistan, opposition sources said Thursday.

A further 38 residents were shot dead in neighbouring Takhtar and Koprak villages as the militia was forced into retreat by forces loyal to ethnic Tajik commander, Ahmad Shah Masood, they said.

"Thirteen of the dead villagers had their hands tied," one source said.

The bombings were a precursor to a Taliban offensive on the strategic city of Taloqan, launched Wednesday morning and signalling a bloody end to a two-week ceasefire agreement.

However, opposition forces have since said the territory lost to the Taliban in Takhar province Wednesday has been regained and advances made beyond Bangi, which had recently been con-

trolled by the militia.

"The bombardment mostly targeted residential areas of Taloqan city.

"Fighting continued today (Thursday) and our forces captured Bangi area completely. Sixty-six Taliban were arrested, 50 were taken yesterday, 20 vehicles were captured and a large number of Taliban were wounded," he said.

On Monday, the Taliban had offered to extend the ceasefire agreement.

Independent confirmation of the battles was not immediately available.

Bangi is 20 kilometres west of Taloqan and divides Takhar, which is held by Masood from the Taliban-held adjacent Kunduz province.

The area has been the focus of a tug-of-war between the two sides. Taloqan's importance is underpinned by its traditional role as a supply base for Masood and its access to the Tajikistan border.

Either side would hold a distinct advantage if they can secure surrounding routes over the coming winter.

"In today's fighting our troops advanced between seven and 10 kilometres from their previous frontline," the sources said.

They said heavy fighting was continuing in the Sin district where local Takhar people "rose against the Taliban and two local commanders joined Masood's forces."

Masood is the last obstacle blocking Taliban ambitions to control the entire country. The religious militia has secured about 80 per cent of Afghanistan and established a puritanical regime under Shariat law.

Air traffic at Kabul airport has been heavier than usual over the past two nights prompting local speculation of further Taliban strikes.

Taliban launch offensive to retake Taloqan

KABUL, Nov 11: The Taliban militia have renewed their autumn offensive at Taloqan in northern Afghanistan against forces loyal to rival commander Ahmad Shah Masood, an opposition spokesman said.

Masood spokesman, Mohammad Aref, said the Taliban began their attack early Wednesday from the nearby town of Bangi.

"I cannot confirm if they have made any ground. Taliban jets bombarded public places in Taloqan city but reports of casualties are yet to come," he said. The attacks came 2 days after the Taliban said they were ready to extend a ceasefire accord with Masood.—AFP

DAWN

12 Nov 1996

Opposition recapture territory

KABUL, Nov 12: Forces loyal to Afghan opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood have repelled Taliban troops from the area they captured in the latest opposition offensive in Takhar province, a spokesman said on Thursday.

Masood's spokesman Mohammad Arif admitted the militia had advanced close to the northeastern province's capital of Taloqan in Wednesday's massive attack which involved thousands of turbaned fighters.

"The Taliban were pushed back towards Bangi where fighting is still going on," Arif told AFP from his northern base by satellite telephone.

Bangi, 20 kilometres west of Taloqan, divides Takhar which is held by Masood.

Arif said the opposition troops were surprised by the Taliban attack, which subsided after a counter-offensive launched by Masood loyalists.

The Taliban offensive stopped after a few hours and "we took all the area back in the counter-attack," he added.

He said dozens of civilians were killed in Taloqan which was heavily bombed by Taliban jets on Wednesday.

The spokesman said fighting was going on outside Taloqan but it was not intense.

The religious militia holds about 80 per cent of Afghanistan including the capital Kabul captured two years ago.

Masood, entrenched in the northeast, is the last obstacle to the Taliban's goal of taking control of the entire country to establish a puritanical Muslim state.—AFP

DAWN

13 NOV 1998

Taliban-Masud agreement on one-week truce

ISLAMABAD: A new one-week truce was mediated Friday between the Afghan Taliban militia and opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masud, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The mediator Sayed Jalal, a Saudi Arabia-based Afghan intellectual, brought about the agreement, the Pakistan-based private information service said.

The report, which could not be independently confirmed, said the purpose of the truce was to facilitate the exchange of prisoners between the warring sides.

Jalal, who has been shuttling between the two sides, had earlier mediated a similar lull in fighting recently, during which a swap of prisoners had taken place, AIP said.

Sayed Jalal is now on his way to Ahmad Shah Masud's stronghold of the Panjsher valley north of Kabul to discuss arrangements for an exchange of prisoners, it added.—AFP

14 NOV 1998
THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Two districts captured from Taliban: Rivals

KABUL (AFP) - Forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood said Saturday that two districts near Bangi in far north Afghanistan had been captured from the Taliban militia.

They said the districts included Ishkamish, which encompasses supply routes between Masood's base in the Panjsher Valley and the Tajikistan border.

"Last night we also took Burka district from the direction of Ishkamish. We have advanced on Khanabad, we are only four kilometres (three miles) from Khanabad town," a Masood spokesman told AFP.

Independent confirmation was not immediately available and Taliban spokesmen could not be reached for comment.

FRONTIER POST
15 NOV 1998

New truce between Taliban and Masood

ISLAMABAD, Nov 13: A new one-week truce was mediated on Friday between the Taliban and opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

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DAWN

14 NOV 1998

Opposition to open new front against Taliban

PESHAWAR (NNI) - Commander Malik Zarin of Eastern Shoora has said that they are opening a new front against Taliban in eastern Afghanistan.

In an interview with a Pushto daily, he accused Taliban of accommodating Khalqis, Parchamis, communists and nationalists in their movement. He said that Afghans have waged jihad for twenty years to get rid of such elements.

He said that his forces are fully prepared and would launch new offensive in eastern provinces of the country within couple of weeks. He said that Taliban have now fully exposed to the Afghans and that is why, they have decided to

flush them out of Kunar.

He called on the Afghans to rise against Taliban and demonstrate the same determination, spirit and zeal as they did against the foreign occupation forces in Afghanistan.

He termed the formation of a broad based government in Afghanistan as the only solution to the conflict and said that all the jihad leaders should be inducted in such a government.

He said the arrest of national elders on the charge of having hands in the alleged abortive coup against Taliban has caused great concern among the people forcing them to rise for a decisive war against the Taliban. He denied these allegations and said that a coup is

always staged by the military-men and that is too in the capital to grab power.

Malik Zarin said that time is now ripe to launch a major attack against the Taliban. He said that winter is fast approaching making it easy for them to start guerrilla war against the student militia. He said that their forces are still deployed in eastern Afghan provinces and can come into action anytime.

He said that there is marked difference in the words and deeds of the Taliban. He alleged that former communists have now grown beard and joined the ranks of Taliban. He said that Taliban can no longer deceive people in the name of Islam.

Masood forces capture 2 districts

KABUL (AFP) - Forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood said Saturday that two districts near Bangi in far north Afghanistan had been captured from the Taliban militia.

They said the districts included Ishkamish, which encompasses supply routes between Masood's base in the Panjsher Valley and the Tajikistan border.

'Last night we also took Burka district from the direction of Ishkamish. We have advanced on Khanabad, we are only four kilometres from Khanabad town,' a Masood spokesman told AFP. Independent confirmation was not immediately available and Taliban spokesmen could not be reached for comment.

Opposition sources said about 1,000

Taliban soldiers had defected to Masood in both districts, which has been the site of heavy fighting in recent days despite efforts to negotiate another ceasefire between the warring sides.

'The Taliban suffered 200 killed or wounded during the fight for Bukha,' the Masood spokesman said.

'The Taliban still hold Bangi bridge, where heavy fighting is going on at the moment.'

The opposition sources have claimed 70 civilians were killed and more than 100 injured during Taliban aerial bombardments at nearby Taloan.

A further 38 residents were shot dead in Takhtar and Koprak villages as the militia were forced into retreat by opposition forces, they said.

Masood forces claim fresh gain

Opposition forces said the districts included Ishkamish, which encompasses supply routes between Masood's base in the Panjsher Valley and the Tajikistan border.—AFP

KABUL, Nov 14: Forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood said on Saturday that two districts near Bangi in far north Afghanistan had been captured from the Taliban.

NATION

15 NOV 1999

DAWN

15 NOV 1999



No. 101 -- November 1998

Afghanistan News Bulletin

Prepared Monthly by Afghanistan News Clipping Services



AFGHAN DEADLY WAR A CHILD'S PLAY!

Price: Pakistan Rs. 400 US\$ 20 -- (Abroad US\$ 30)

Afghanistan News Bulletin

No. 101 November 1998

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Afghanistan News Bulletin
Published monthly by Afghanistan
News Clipping Services (ANCS),
Peshawar, Pakistan.
c/o Tel: # (0521) 841083
Founder: Fawad Ahmad Azizi
Compiler: Tawfiq Ahmad Azizi

PRICE

Pakistan: Pak Rs.400.00 US\$20.00
Abroad: US\$ 30.00